

PLUCK AND LUCK

THE SMUGGLERS OF THE SHANNON OR THE IRISH MEG MERRILES

AND OTHER STORIES By Berton Bertrou



The light from the torch flashed on the face of the insensible lad. Bat Moran looked up at the old magistrate, with tearful eyes, while he exclaimed: "For heaven's sake, send for a doctor at once."

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The Smugglers of the Shannon

OR, THE IRISH MEG MERRILES

By BERTON BERTREW

CHAPTER I.—The Smuggler Captain's Vow.

Wild and dark was that night on the Irish coast as the smuggling schooner Molly Asthore dashed in toward the mouth of the Shannon River. On after her swept an English revenue cutter, blazing away with her bow guns, none of the balls from which struck the saucy dame careering on to a haven of safety up the friendly river. On the deck of the smuggler, with his spy-glass in hand, stood Captain Racket, the bold owner and commander of the vessel, and by his side stood a young lad dressed in the garb of a sailor. The captain was watching a bright light fixed to a headland on the right bank of the river while he addressed the lad, saying:

"A rough night for your first visit to the Irish coast, Henny, but it suits me well."

The lad trembled a little as he looked back toward the belching cutter, and he asked, in sweet and plaintive tones:

"Is there any danger of the ship behind striking us, father?"

"There is little fear of that, Henny, while the waves are rolling in that fashion. Don't talk in that maudlin style, or the lads aboard here will suspect you. Up with the green light, my hearties, and we will soon give the shark behind us the slip."

A large green lantern was at once hoisted to the foremast of the schooner, and it had not appeared there many seconds when the bright light on the headland was extinguished. A very dark cloud appeared over them at the same time, and Captain Racket gave orders to change the course of the little vessel. He then turned to the lad at his side, saying:

"We will give them the slip now, Henny, as the sharks won't dare follow us into the Shannon on such a night as this. Down with the green light again."

The lad looked back over the dark waters as he remarked to the smuggler:

"I couldn't see the vessel behind us now, father, if it wasn't for the flashes of the cannon. Can they see us, think you?"

"Not they, Henny; I want to give you a few final instructions before we land. Do you think any of the lads on board suspect you?"

"I think not, sir. You know that I have not ventured much out of the cabin, and I tried to act my part as well as I could."

The smuggler patted the lad on the shoulder again, as he said in his gruff tones:

"You did well, Henny, barring that milk-and-water voice of yours. Now for your final instructions."

"I am all attention, sir," said the lad, as he clasped his father by the arm, "but I think I will remember what you have told me."

"We will see about that, Henny. Now, where were you born, and who are you?"

"I was born in Cadiz, in Spain, and I am the daughter of a merchant residing in that city; my first name being Henrietta."

The smuggler patted the pretended youth again, as he said:

"All correct so far, Henny. Now, what is your object in visiting Ireland?"

Henny looked shyly up into the rough smuggler's face as he asked:

"The real object or the pretended one, sir?"

The smuggler grasped the arm of his companion convulsively as he said:

"Thunder and lightning, what have I been training you for all these years? Did I not warn you that the real object of your visit must never be mentioned?"

Henny turned a pair of pleading eyes up at the angry man as he said to him:

"Don't be so impatient with me, father. Indeed, I am not myself at all in this garb. Just wait until I put on my own proper garments again, when we get on shore, and then you will see if I have forgotten your instructions. Besides, I am nervous over the storm and that frightful firing behind us. Mercy, what is that now?"

As the lad spoke a stray ball from the revenue cutter struck the schooner in the stern, and went ploughing through the little cabin below them. As luck would have it, another ball struck the highest mast of the little vessel a few moments after, and over it tumbled to the deck, making a fearful clatter. Then all was confusion on board the smuggling vessel, Captain Racket yelling like a demon and ordering his faint-hearted companion to go below at the same time. The smuggling captain was a man past the prime of life, with a fierce, weather-stained countenance, flashing dark eyes, and a large, heavy beard. He was somewhat above the middle height, with broad shoulders and long, powerful arms, and all those who sailed with him declared that he possessed an ungovernable

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temper. If Captain Racket had lived about a hundred years earlier he would have been a pirate on the Spanish Main.

No one could tell where the daring man came from, as he was never known to speak of his early life, but he had a decidedly Spanish cast of countenance, and he could speak the language of that country with the utmost fluency. The smuggling schooner, Molly Asthore, generally traded between France and the Irish coast, but her crew were a little surprised when the captain gave orders to head her for Spain on their last voyage. On reaching Cadiz, Captain Racket shipped a valuable cargo of wines and silks. He also took on board a handsome youth about nineteen years of age, whom he declared was his son, and who at once assumed the duties of a cabin-boy. The rough smugglers on board soon noticed that the pretended lad was very timid and reserved; that he spoke English and Spanish, and that he rarely ventured on deck during the voyage to the Irish coast. The pretended youth was really Captain Racket's own daughter, and the smuggler was taking her to Ireland in order to carry out a scheme of vengeance which he had planned long years before.

The only person on board the Molly Asthore who looked on the disguised girl with suspicious eyes was Bat Moran, the former cabin-boy. Bat was a strapping Irish lad from the banks of the Shannon, and he had served three years on board the smuggler. He was a spirited, high-strung lad of nineteen, possessing a fair education and more than ordinary ambition, while his courage and keen, native wit served to carry him through many a rough scrape. But Moran was not at all jealous of the new cabin-boy, as he was only too glad to take a place as an able seaman, and he was tired of waiting on the rough and passionate smuggler captain. When the mast went over the disguised girl hastened down into the cabin with trembling steps, and she then flung herself on a lounge, covering her face with her hands, as she groaned aloud:

"Oh, this is fearful, as I know that the vessel will go down and we'll all be drowned. Why did father bring me over here on such a wicked mission?"

And the young girl moaned in agony, while the little vessel rocked and rolled as if at the complete mercy of the waves. The Molly Asthore was at the complete mercy of the waves, as the ball striking her stern had disabled the helm, and she was drifting in toward the rough coast without any guidance. The young girl could also hear the cries of her father on deck, and she judged from them that they were in a desperate plight indeed. She was still moaning aloud, when Bat Moran sprang down into the cabin, crying:

"Get up on deck, my lad, as we will have to take to the boats."

The timid creature was so alarmed that she was scarcely able to rise from the sofa, but she did stagger to her feet as she gasped forth:

"Is the vessel sinking, sir?"

"I am in dread it is, my lad, but you keep up your heart and we will be all safe. Thunder and turf! what ails you at all?"

The disguised girl staggered toward the door, turning as pale as death at the same time, and she would have fallen if the young man had not

caught her in his arms. In another moment he was bearing her up to the deck as he said to himself:

"By the great guns! it is just as I suspected. It is not a lad at all, but a pretty girl."

When they reached the deck the smugglers were lowering the boats, and the revenue cutter was bearing down on them, sending up rockets and firing her guns in quick succession. The disabled smuggler was then drifting in close to the mouth of the river, and Captain Racket was pointing a gun at the revenue cutter as he yelled aloud:

"I'll give the shark one shot, anyhow, and then good-bye to the Molly Asthore."

Bat Moran was still holding the young girl in his arms when the cannon on the deck exploded, and she opened her eyes at the shock as she gasped forth:

"Mercy, we are blown up!"

The shot from the smuggler did take effect on the revenue cutter, as one of her masts was seen to fall. Captain Racket then shook his clenched hands back at his enemies, while he yelled aloud:

"By all that is wicked, but I'll have it out with you yet! You have got the best of us now, but I swear by the lightning and the storm to have it out with you another day. To the boats, lads, while I go below to lay the train for blowing up Molly Asthore."

The smuggler captain was so enraged and excited that he did not notice his daughter in the arms of Bat Moran, who was then bearing her to one of the boats. Two of the boats put off on the instant, and the third remained behind for the desperate captain. In that third boat sat Bat Moran, still holding the half-fainting girl in his arms. Captain Racket soon appeared on the deck again, and he stood there a few moments shaking both hands at his enemy, as he repeated a fearful vow. He then sprang into the boat and gave orders to pull for the shore. Then away over the great waves went the strong, long boat, and down toward the doomed schooner bore the revenue cutter.

As the boat swept along the enraged captain did not notice his disguised daughter, as his eyes were fixed on his little vessel alone. A bright flame soon shot up from the beautiful craft, which was followed by a fearful explosion, and the dark sky was illuminated by the bursting flame. The magazine in the smuggling craft had exploded, and that was the last of the saucy little craft so long known on the Irish coast as Molly Asthore. On toward the shore swept the three boats, and then out to sea steered the revenue cutter, her foremast hanging over her side. Captain Racket kept staring at his enemy until she disappeared in the darkness, and his trembling daughter, who was then seated beside Bat Moran, could hear him still muttering vows of vengeance. The boat was drawing toward the shore before the angry captain thought of his daughter, and he at once cried:

"Where is the laa?"

"I am here, father," answered the disguised girl.

The words were scarcely uttered when a huge wave struck the boat, the angry water breaking in over them in a deluge. The little craft was swamped almost on the instant, and her luckless crew were soon battling with the merciless waves.

CHAPTER II.—The Irish Gypsy Woman.

"Oh, say that the lad is not dead, Mag, and I will pray for you the longest day I live!"

Thus spoke Bat Moran as he knelt over an insensible figure reclining in a large cave on the banks of the Shannon. A large fire was blazing in the rude hearth near them, by the light of which a tall, gaunt old woman, with masculine features, could also be seen bending over the insensible girl. The old woman was in the act of pouring some brandy from a flask down the throat of the insensible young creature as she replied, in hoarse, croaking tones:

"Give me none of your prayers, Bat Moran, as I don't need them. What a pretty lad he is, and it is a pity that he should die.

The young man clasped the girl's hand between his own, and rubbed it vigorously as he cried:

"But I tell you he must not die, Mag. Sure it is not fair that I should have all my trouble in bringing him through the waves to have him die on my hands now. Glory be to goodness, but the hand is getting warm now, and he is coming through. Don't spare the brandy, Mag, and I'll bless you forever, whether you will or no."

A fierce groan burst from the old creature as she cast a pair of glaring eyes at Bat, while she grunted forth again:

"Hang your blessings! Who is this lad, and where does he come from?"

"It is the captain's son, and he shipped with us at Cadiz."

The old woman glared at the pretty features before her as she muttered aloud:

"The captain's son? I never knew that Captain Racket had as one before."

A dripping form staggered into the cave at the moment, and the smuggler captain darted forward to fling the old woman away from his daughter, as he cried, in fierce tones:

"Hands off the lad, you witch. I want some of that brandy right off!"

The rough smuggler flung himself on the ground beside the young girl and raised her head to his breast, reaching one hand out for the flask at the same time. The tall old woman sprang to her feet holding the flask in her hand and glared down at the smuggler, as she exclaimed:

"What manners you have, Roderick Racket. You'll not taste any of my liquor until you mend them."

The old creature dashed the flask into the fire as she spoke, and then turned as if to leave the cavern. A fierce imprecation burst from the smuggler as he glared after the old woman, while Bat Moran cried, in appealing tones:

"For heaven's sake, good Mag, don't leave us in a huff that way. The poor lad is coming to now, and we will all want something to eat soon. If you don't come back I'll never open my lips to you again."

The indignant old woman turned around on being thus appealed to, and strode back into the cave again, muttering aloud:

"I don't forget you, Bat Moran, and that day at the fair."

She then turned her scoffing face on the smuggler captain, pointing to the reviving girl with her long finger, as she remarked:

"I did not know that you had a son, Rod Racket."

"What is it to you, Mag Morrison, whether I have a son or not? If you have any heart in that old frame of yours, give me a hand to revive the lad and don't stand clattering there."

"Yes, yes, good Mag!" cried Bat Moran, "do give us a hand, and I'll fight for you again with all my heart and soul whenever you want it."

Being thus appealed to, the fierce old woman hastened to assist the disguised girl, who soon opened her eyes and stared around the cave, muttering:

"Where am I now?"

The smuggler clasped his daughter's hand, and his rough face beamed with joy as he replied:

"You are all safe, Henny. Cheer up, lad, and all will be well soon."

The old woman had her eyes fixed on the young girl in the most intent manner, when the latter stared up at her and a sort of a shudder passed over her frame, as she inquired:

"Who is that, father?"

The smuggler interposed himself between his daughter and the old gypsy woman, as he replied:

"Don't be alarmed, Henny, as this is an old friend of mine."

The young girl's eyes then fell on Bat Moran, and she at once seized his hand and pressed it to her lips in the most impulsive manner, crying:

"It was you who saved me from the waves, brave young man. I now remember all."

The rough smuggler also grasped young Moran's hand, as he cried:

"You are a brave lad, Bat, and I won't forget you. The Molly Asthore is no more now, but I'll have another craft afloat soon again, and then you may swear that I'll not forget friends or foes."

A scornful laugh burst from the old gypsy woman, and she cried:

"Beware, Bat Moran; Rod Racket will be your ruin yet if you do not watch him."

"Shut up, you old gypsy hag!" cried the smuggler captain, "and see to getting us some grub. I wonder if any of the other lads in the boat got in safe?"

"They did not," answered the old gypsy woman. "The two boats landed all safe, and the lads in them are now up at the tavern making beasts of themselves. Had you not better go up there also with this lad?"

"No—no!" growled the smuggler, as he cast a warning glance at his disguised daughter. "You can go if you want to, Bat."

The lad cast a glance at the young girl, and then replied:

"I would sooner remain here with you, captain, if you don't object."

The keen eyes of the smuggler were bent on the young man, and he stepped toward the entrance of the cavern as he said to him:

"Come out here with me, lad. Henny, dry your clothes by the fire there, and Mag will hasten to get us some grub and drink."

The young man followed the smuggler out of the cave, and they were soon standing together on the strand below. The storm was still raging fiercely, yet Bat Moran could perceive an ominous cloud on the brow of his passionate captain. Placing his two muscular hands on the shoulders of the youth, the rough captain glared at him in a fierce manner as he asked:

"What did you mean by looking at my son as you did a moment ago?"

The young man felt that the storm was coming, and yet he answered in bold tones:

"I didn't mean anything wrong, captain. What harm is it to look at the lad I brought ashore in my own arms, I would like to know?"

The rough smuggler glanced around the sandy beach and then up toward the cavern ere he bent his eyes on the youth again and asked:

"Ycu brought the lad ashore in your arms, did you?"

"To be sure, captain, but I am not making any boast about it at all."

"Did you discover anything as you were bringing him ashore?"

The lad looked fearlessly up at the scowling countenance, as he replied, in honest tones:

"As you ask me the question fairly, Captain Racket, I will tell you that I did."

"What did you discover?"

"When we thought we were both going down together, sir, and he with his arms clinging around my neck, he whispered to me that he was not a lad at all, but a young girl. I swear to you that I did not ask him at all, but he told me on his own account."

Bat Moran uttered the last words as he found that the huge hands of the rough smuggler moved up from his shoulder and pressed around his neck, while he could see that the man's eyes were glaring with rage. The threatened lad made an impulsive movement as if to break away from his passionate captain, but the latter grasped him firmly by the throat as he hissed forth:

"You infernal shark, I'll close your mouth forever. I'll teach you to pry into my affairs."

Realizing that he was about to be choked to death, the active young man struck out with desperate strength and planted a stunning blow on the temple of the smuggler, who reeled back before it, releasing his grasp on Bat's throat at the same time. A yell of rage then burst from the rough man, and he sprang at the youth again, crying:

"And so you would cope with me, you young shark? I will soon settle you."

Bat's first impulse was to turn and fly, but he was as proud as he was brave, and he only retreated backward as he cried:

"What have I done that you should want to kill me, Captain Racket?"

The only reply of the passionate man was to spring at the lad with another cry of rage, and aim a blow at his head. Bat sprang aside to avoid the blow, while he yelled aloud:

"If you mean to kill me, I'll fight to the death against you, the mischief take you!"

The active lad then sprang at the enraged smuggler before he could turn on himself again, and he dealt him a blow on the side of the neck that sent him reeling into the waves. At that moment the big gypsy woman dashed down on the strand, flourishing a large stick, as she cried aloud:

"What wild work is this here? Red Racket, how dare you make at this good lad?"

The passionate smuggler dragged himself out of the way, and sprang toward the old woman and the lad, as he yelled forth:

"None of your interference here, you old gypsy witch, and let us have it out!"

The old woman stepped out in front of the young man and raised her heavy stick as she replied:

"Hands off, I say, Rod Racket, or I'll stretch you stiff on the strand! Is this your thanks for the lad saving your boy from the waves? Are you a man or a fiend to turn on a friend in that way?"

The disguised girl ran down the strand at the same moment, crying:

"Oh, father, father, why do you assail that young man who so bravely saved me from the waves? Has the loss of your vessel set you mad?"

The enraged smuggler sprang to seize his daughter by the arm, and he then turned to drag her up toward the cavern, while he turned to the others, crying:

"Be silent on your life, Bat Moran, or I will have it out with you again."

CHAPTER III.—Bat Moran's Pledge.

The old gypsy woman and the young smuggler did not attempt to follow Captain Racket and his daughter up to the cavern until his rough voice was heard crying aloud:

"I want you, Mag Morrison."

The old woman turned to obey the summons, as she said to the lad:

"Go up to the tavern, Bat, but don't make a goose of yourself by taking too much, as you may want a clear head tonight yet. I must obey the captain, you know."

The young man walked by her side up the beach as he asked:

"Will I see you again tonight, Mag?"

"Who can tell? If you should need me, give the signal, and I will be with you."

The young man then turned away in another direction, while the gypsy woman strode toward the cavern, muttering to herself:

"Can it be that the lad is his son? Where have I seen that pretty face before?"

Bat Moran made his way to the village tavern, where he found several of his old shipmates carousing away, but it seemed that none of the others in the third boat escaped from the waves. The youth was received with open arms, and invited to drink freely, while anxious inquiries were made regarding Captain Racket and the rest of the crew. When Bat replied that their captain was all safe on shore with his son an old smuggler cried:

"Hurrah for our jolly captain! We will soon be afloat in another smart craft, as he has plenty of the stuff to fit out one."

While he was rough and passionate, he possessed some splendid traits of character, and he was beloved by the hardy smugglers, who were never known to want for anything while in his service. After partaking of some food and drink, Bat Moran was about to withdraw from the carouse, when Captain Racket entered the tavern. A hearty shout of welcome greeted the captain, and when it had subsided he addressed his friends, saying:

"Keep up your hearts, my hearties. Our good Molly Asthore is no more, but I will have another splendid craft under us."

Another hearty shout of applause greeted the speech, and the captain ordered drinks in plenty for the whole party. He then turned and beckoned Bat Moran aside, as he whispered to him:

"No hard feelings with me, lad, for what happened to-night as I must have been out of my senses. Can I have a few words in private, and don't be afraid that I will raise my hands to you again?"

Bat Moran was of a forgiving disposition, and he grasped the hand of his old captain, as he replied:

"Don't mention it again, captain. Will I step out on the road with you?"

"It will be the best place for what I have to say to you, Bat, so come along."

The rain had stopped when they set out on the high-road, and they walked along for a little distance without uttering a word. On reaching a secluded spot, Captain Racket turned abruptly on his companion, saying:

"My lad, have I not been a kind officer to you, barring a little outbreak of temper now and then?"

"That you have, sire, and it is sorry I was to have a falling out with you."

"If that is the case, will you make me a solemn promise and take your oath on it?"

The young man knew that the pledge required would be in reference to the young woman, and he answered:

"I would like to hear what it is first, sir."

Captain Racket was a bluff and blunt sailor, and he at once answered:

"It is about the girl. To be candid with you, she is my daughter, but I had my own grave reasons for bringing her over here disguised as a boy."

"That is no business of mine, captain," said the honest lad, "and I am sure I would never be prying into your secrets if she had not told me herself when we were certain that we were both going down in the waves. But what do you want me to promise?"

"I want you to promise that you will never speak to the girl again, or pretend to know her, if you should meet her."

The young man hesitated to make the pledge, as he had become deeply interested in the girl whose life he had saved, and the smuggler captain spoke in more angry tones, saying:

"Why do you hesitate to give me the pledge, Bat Moran? My daughter is a young lady, and it is not likely that she will ever meet you again."

"If that is the case, captain, what is the use of my giving a pledge to you?"

"Because you may chance to meet her again, and if you should I want you to swear that you will not pretend to know her, or mention to any one that you had ever seen her before."

Bat Moran was a proud fellow, and he answered in very dignified tones:

"Captain Racket, you may be captain and sure that I will never speak to the young lady, or pretend to know her either, unless she offers to speak to me, and even then I'll not forget what you have told me."

The rough old smuggler laughed at the young man's pride as he said:

"Come—come, Moran, don't be a fool. My daughter will never forget how you saved her to-

night, and I won't either, but it is a matter of life and death to her, and to me as well, that she will not be known hereafter, and that is why I ask this pledge of you."

The lad did not hesitate a moment longer, as he promptly replied, in earnest tones:

"If that is the case, Captain Racket, I will swear to you that I'll never pretend to know her, good or bad, no matter where I may see her, unless she may choose to speak to me herself, and then——"

"And then," interrupted the old smuggler, "you may reply to her, but it is not at all probable that you will ever meet again."

"Be it so, captain."

"But you must also give me your solemn promise that you will never mention to a living soul what you have discovered to-night."

"I'll give you my solemn promise, sir, that I'll never betray your daughter's secret by act, word or deed."

The old smuggler grasped the young man warmly by the hand, saying:

"You are a fine, honest lad, Moran, and I will be your friend for life. Above all, don't ever let Mag, the gypsy, drag the secret out of you, for that would be the certain destruction of my daughter."

"No fear of that, captain."

Captain Racket and his pretended son disappeared from the neighborhood also.

Bat Moran lived quietly with his mother for over a month, and there was not a single waking hour during that time that he was not thinking of the mysterious young girl whose life he had saved, while she was often present to him in his dreams as well. One evening as he was returning to his cottage home from the neighboring village the young smuggler heard the clatter of hoofs behind him, and on stepping aside to make way for the riders a lady and gentleman dashed past him at a full gallop. Bat Moran started in amazement on recognizing the female rider, who was no other than the beautiful creature whom he had rescued from the waves. And he was equally startled on seeing her in company with a man who was no other than Captain Pierce Rodney, commander of the revenue cutter which had destroyed the Molly Asthore on that stormy night. The captain of the revenue cutter was a handsome young man of twenty-seven, and he was the only son of Sir Strange Rodney, one of the richest landlords on the banks of the Shannon. The perplexed lad returned to his cottage home in a nervous state of mind as he said to himself:

"Wonders will never cease. What in the mischief can the young lady be up to riding out with Captain Rodney that way, and how did she become acquainted with him at all?"

After eating supper, Bat Moran hastened to the village again to make a few quiet inquiries. He then learned that the young lady he had seen was a visitor at Rodney Hall; that her name was Miss Henrietta Gascon, and that she was either French or Spanish. Still more perplexed than ever, the young smuggler strolled out toward Rodney Hall in the hope of getting another glimpse of the mysterious young girl. Entering a large park belonging to the Rodney estate, and where he had often snared rabbits in his boyhood days. Bat

Moran made his way toward the hall, muttering to himself:

"This beats me all out. What the mischief is that?"

The explosion of a pistol not more than twenty paces away startled him at the moment, and it was followed by a cry of agony. Without a moment's hesitation the brave young smuggler darted toward the spot from whence the shot was heard, but he had not proceeded many steps when a female form darted by him on the path. One glance at that face and figure caused the youth to tremble with agitation as he again recognized the old smuggler's daughter. Pausing a moment, as if uncertain how to act, and feeling in the meantime that some tragic event had occurred, he said to himself:

"Heaven save me, what has happened, and what am I to do at all?"

Before the young man could come to any decision, three game-keepers sprang out from the trees and pounced on him, crying:

"There is the murdering rascal. Have at him and take him, boys."

CHAPTER IV.—Hunted For His Life.

It was quite dark in the park when the three gamekeepers sprang out on Bat Moran, each of them flourishing a heavy stick which they were wont to use in beating off trespassers. The young smuggler carried a stout blackthorn in his hand, and his first impulse on being thus attacked was to defend himself. Parrying the blow aimed at him by the foremost assailant, he returned the blow with interest and stretched the man on the path. While thus engaged the young man's mind worked like a steam engine, and he realized the full consequences of being caught prowling about the park at that time of night, even though he may not be accused of any more serious crime. The cries of his assailants, however, as well as the shot and the groan he had heard, warned him that he would be accused of a greater crime than poaching, and he turned and fled along the path at full speed, while he said to himself:

"This is a nice scrape to be in, and I not to blame at all. Something tells me that I am in the height of trouble and that that young girl is the cause of it."

The young smuggler was one of the fleetest on the Shannon side, and away through the park he flew, like a hunted deer, with the three gamekeepers yelling and shouting as they passed on after him. Those gamekeepers were very active men, also, as it was their duty to pursue the young poachers of the neighborhood, but they soon found that the lad before them could outstrip them. The fugitive soon gained the public road, and he then dashed along toward his cottage home as he said to himself:

"I pray to goodness that they did not know me, and then I may be safe. What could have happened in the wood when that shot went off, and what could the girl be doing there at all?"

The gamekeepers were soon out on the road also, and they kept up the chase with great vigor, yelling and shouting as they ran. The pursuers were soon joined by some horsemen riding out

from the village, who dashed along at a full gallop when they heard the cry of

"Captain Rodney has been shot in the park, and there goes his murderer!"

The haunted youth heard the cry, and his heart beat all the faster, while he said to himself:

"Mercy on me, but this is awful. If I am taken nothing will save me."

Mounted men were soon close on the fugitive, one of them crying:

"Hold up there, you murdering thief, or I'll brain you with my whip."

Bat Moran turned his eyes for a moment, and he saw the man dashing down on him with the heavy end of his riding-whip raised to strike him. Obeying a sudden impulse, the active lad made a sudden bound toward the park wall, and over it he went before the man could touch him with the whip. He then darted in among the trees again, directing his course down toward the river, while he kept praying to himself that he had not been recognized. Only a few of his very intimate friends in the neighborhood, including his mother, were aware that Bat was a smuggler, as it was believed that he was engaged on a trading vessel running from Limerick to one of the French ports. When at home for a holiday he seldom wore his sailor suit, and fortunately on the present occasion he appeared in the garb of a simple country lad. As the horsemen could not clear the high stone wall, three of them dismounted to join in the chase with the gamekeepers, and their cries soon resounded through the woods, as they ran to and fro in search of the fugitive. Bat Moran's first thought was to make for his cottage home, but he soon reflected that such a movement would lead to his discovery and to greater peril if he should be traced there. He then swung to the right, making down away from his home, as he said to himself:

"What a nice scrape I'll be in if Captain Rodney is really shot and I am taken up for killing him. It will be certain to come out that I am a smuggler, and they will say that I shot him out of revenge for his sinking the Molly Asthore."

The hunted youth pushed on at his best pace until he reached the bank of the river, when he drew up to listen for his pursuers. Not hearing any sounds of pursuit behind him the lad rested himself on the bank of the river, as he muttered aloud:

"What am I to do now at all? How am I to find out whether I am suspected or not? What a queer thing it is to see the captain's daughter in such a place and under a cloud dark enough to condemn an angel. Well, well, she will be safe for me, as I wouldn't turn against her if they were to hang myself for killing Captain Rodney in the morning."

The young man kept seated for some time as if undecided as to where he should turn, and he soon forgot his own peril while thinking of the mysterious young girl whose life he had saved. After thus ruminating for some time Bat Moran arose to his feet, muttering aloud:

"I'll venture home, anyway, and it will be time enough to think of cutting sticks for it when I know that they are after me."

"Know that now, Bat Moran," cried a sharp, hoarse voice near him.

The young man recognized the voice on the

instant, and he turned to the big old gypsy woman, saying:

"And is that you, Meg? What is that you say about the sharks being after me?"

Old Mag seized the young man by the arm and drew him into the shelter of some tall bushes as she said, in cautious tones:

"Speak not so loud, Bat Moran, as you are a hunted lad now, and you must fly for your life. What fiend tempted you to shoot Captain Rodney?"

"I didn't shoot Captain Rodney or anybody else, I tell you, old woman," replied Bat, in very indignant tones.

"Then why are the hounds of the law after you? It is said that you were caught red-handed in his father's park, and that you nearly killed one of the gamekeepers also in escaping."

"I don't care what they say, I had no more to do with the shooting of the young captain than you had, Mag, and you must believe me."

"But you were in the park at the time of the shooting, poor lad."

"I'll admit to you, Mag, that is true enough, but I didn't fire the shot."

"Who did, then?"

The hunted youth could hazard a sharp guess at the moment, but he answered:

"How can I tell, Mag? All I know is that I had no hand or part in the work, and I think you ought to know me better than to suspect me of such black work."

The old gypsy woman bent on the young man a pair of piercing eyes, as she rejoined:

"I do think better of you, Bat Moran, but you are accused by one who has known you since you were an infant, and he is a man of truth."

"Who is that, Mag?"

"Charlie Desmond. He saw you flying out of the park with the gamekeepers after you, and he pursued you on horseback until you sprang back over the wall again. If you did not do the shooting you must know who did, and you are in dark trouble."

The young man felt the truth of the old gypsy's words only too well, and a deep sigh escaped from him ere he said to her:

"I see that I am in a bad hobble, Mag, and I don't know what to say or do. All I can say to you is that I am as innocent of the act as the child unborn, and I hope in goodness you'll believe me."

The old gypsy grasped the honest lad's hand very earnestly as she responded:

"I do believe you, Bat Moran, and I will aid you in the dark trouble that is on you, but you should have full confidence in me."

"In what way, Mag?"

"Tell me who was with you in the park, as you know that Mag Morrison will never peach, and remember that I ask you for your own good."

A cold shudder passed over the young man's frame as he thought of the smuggler's daughter, while he hastily replied:

"I swear by all that's holy, Mag, that there was no one at all with me in the park."

"Then who fired the shot?"

"How in the mischief can I tell? I own to you that I fired the shot myself as I was taking a stroll through the park, and then the first thing I knew the gamekeepers were at me."

The old gypsy woman cast a suspicious glance at the young man as she said:

"Bat Moran, you are keeping back something from me, but I will not turn my back on you on that account. Let us away, as the dogs of the law will soon be on your track, and you must find a shelter for the present."

"Where will I shelter, Mag?"

"In the old cave down the river, and then you must away to France or America."

A groan escaped from the young man, as he turned to follow the old gypsy woman, saying:

"'Tis hard to have to fly like a robber when one is innocent of any wrongdoing."

"Can you prove your innocence, Bat Moran?" asked Mag, as she stood over a small boat secured in a cove beneath them.

"I am in dread not, Mag."

"You could if you liked, foolish youth, as I can see in your face. You are silent because you want to screen some one else. I will not ask you any more questions, but this I will tell you: If you are taken and threatened with the rope, I will discover the real culprit, no matter who it may be."

A cold chill passed over the young man's frame as he thought of Mag Morrison hunting down the beautiful young girl and dragging her to the scaffold in order to save his own life, and he said:

"For gracious sake, Mag, don't meddle in the ugly business to help me, as I won't thank you for it."

The old woman cast another suspicious glance at the youth, and then stepped into the boat as she muttered to herself:

"There is something very dark in this business, but I'll throw light on it ere long."

The young man entered the boat also, and they were soon gliding down the beautiful river as fast as the current and two pairs of oars could bear them. About an hour after they arrived at the large cave where Bat Moran had borne the young girl when he rescued her from the waves, and the old gypsy woman proceeded to make the place as comfortable as possible, saying:

"You may have to remain here with me for some days, foolish lad, and I will send word to your mother that you are safe."

"And tell her I am not guilty; but there will be no need of that, as she could never believe that I could kill a man in cold blood."

"Will I also tell her that you are screening some one else?"

"Don't say anything of the kind, Mag, or we may fall out yet."

The old gypsy did not reply aloud, but she did mutter to herself:

"Foolish lad, he cannot deceive me."

After Mag had made a fire in the rough grate she left the cave, saying:

"I am going to the village for some food and drink, and you will be safe here."

Bat Moran was seated before the fire in deep meditation, when he heard a heavy footstep behind him in the cave, and he started to his feet to encounter the old smuggler captain.

"You here, captain?" cried the young man. "And what is the news?"

The old smuggler's face was distorted by a savage frown as he responded:

"The worst of news, Bat. Is there any one here but you?"

Captain Roderick Racket cast a cautious glance around the cave as he asked the question. The young man told him that old Mag had gone up to the village, and that they were alone, while he continued, saying:

"What is your bad news, captain, as I have some of that kind myself?"

"I know all that has happened to you, Bat, but I have worse to tell. My dear girl has been taken by the infamous sharks, and she is accused of having shot that rascal, Captain Rodney."

"Why, sir, how could that be, when I am accused of doing it myself?"

"I know you were at first, my lad, but it seems that something turned up at the hall that turned suspicion on my girl. Remember your pledge to me, and do not tell a soul who she is."

"No fear of that, captain. What are you going to do to save your daughter?"

"Hang my eyes if I know what to do, as the confounded affair has floored me."

The lad was moving toward the entrance of the cave as he said:

"I know what I'll do then."

"What are you going to do, lad?"

"Give myself up in her place and confess that it was I shot Captain Rodney."

The old smuggler sprang forward and grasped the young fellow's arm, as he cried:

"You can't mean that, lad?"

"But I do, sir. It will be a strong prison that will hold me, and it would be a crying shame to have the gentle young lady locked up at all. The hue and cry was out after me first, and they can't prove that she fired the shot. I'll go and say it was I did it, and that I would not have another suffer for me."

Captain Racket seized the young fellow by the hand and pressed it in the warmest manner, as he cried:

"You are a hero, Bat Moran, but just think a moment of what you are about."

"I don't want to think at all, sir, as my mind is made up what to do. I didn't save your sweet daughter from a watery grave to have her be flung into prison, if I can help it."

The devoted youth then attempted to break away from the old smuggler, but the latter held him in his strong grasp, saying:

"Hold hard a while, youngster, and let us understand how you are going to steer."

"My course is clear enough, captain. Where is the young lady now?"

"She is held up in Rodney Hall."

"Then I will go up there and have her released by giving myself up."

"If you do that, lad, I swear to release you before morning. I have purchased the neatest and the fastest schooner ever built in France, and she is off the coast now with a full crew. I did think of rescuing my darling to-night with the lads, but it will be better if you do it in your way, and then we will rescue you from the sharks."

"Very good, sir. Then I'll away to the hall at once, and you can give me a hand after."

The old gypsy woman burst into the cave at the moment and glared fiercely at Captain Racket and the young man, as she cried:

"Where are you going, Bat Moran?"

"On some business for me, Mag," answered the

old smuggler, winking at the young man. "I have another Molly Asthore off the coast."

The old gypsy woman seized Bat's arm, also crying:

"You will not leave this place to-night, mad youth, if I can help it, and I can. Captain Racket, do you know that he is hunted for his life?"

The young fellow burst away from the old woman and ran out of the cave, crying:

"I shot Captain Rodney, and an innocent person has been taken in my place. It is better to die for my crime like a man than let another suffer."

CHAPTER V.—The Two Prisoners.

Great was the excitement at Rodney Hall on the night when the young captain was shot in the park. After the escape of Bat Moran, and while the hue and cry was still out against him, one of the gamekeepers returned to the hall and sought an interview with Sir Strange Rodney, the father of the dead man. After that interview was over Sir Strange summoned a certain young lady visitor into his presence, and then followed a very exciting scene. On the evidence of the gamekeeper, the old gentleman accused the young lady of having shot his son in the park, and she denied the charge in very decided language. That young lady was the old smuggler's daughter, and she was known and welcomed at Rodney Hall as Miss Henrietta Gascon, the daughter of a worthy old Spanish merchant of Cadiz. The young lady was traveling in Ireland in charge of a governess when she met young Captain Rodney in Dublin, and the sailor became so infatuated with the Spanish beauty that he invited her to his father's mansion on the banks of the Shannon, where she at once became a general favorite. From the story told by the gamekeeper, Sir Strange believed that the young woman had shot his son, and that Bat Moran was implicated with her. Sir Strange Rodney was a magistrate, and he could have sent Henrietta Gascon to jail at once, but he concluded to wait until morning. The young lady was, therefore, placed as a prisoner in her own room, but guarded in such a manner that it was almost impossible for her to escape. While it was publicly announced that Miss Gascon was guilty of the crime, private orders were also issued to search high and low for Bat Moran. About ten o'clock that night Sir Strange was seated alone in his library thinking over the unhappy event of the evening and of other startling events in his past life as well, when he heard a window behind him open and a young man sprang into the apartment, saying:

"Don't be frightened, Sir Strange Rodney, as I came here to give myself up, for I am the one who shot Captain Rodney this evening."

Sir Strange was not in the least alarmed, as he was a brave old fellow, and he at once turned on the young fellow, saying:

"You are Bat Moran, I suppose?"

"That is my name, sir. A short time ago I heard that a strange young lady stopping here was charged with the deed, and I could not stand that at all. So here I am to give myself up."

The old gentleman fixed his penetrating eyes on the youth for some moments ere he asked:

"Why did you shoot my son?"

"Because he wronged me."

"In what way did he wrong you?"

"It is no matter about that now, sir, and it will all come out on the trial."

"Do you know this young lady?"

"Not at all, sir, but I couldn't sleep, bad as I am, while another was charged with my deed."

Sir Strange rang a bell, and then moved to the door, where a male servant soon appeared. After giving some orders to the man in low tones the old magistrate turned to the self-accused youth again, saying:

"Are you certain that you do not know the young lady accused?"

"How could I know her, sir, as I am only a poor sailor lad, and I heard that she is one of your kind, and stopping here as a visitor?"

"Were you not with her in the park this evening when my son was shot?"

"On my solemn oath I wasn't, sir."

At that moment the mysterious maiden was led into the room by two male servants, who at once retired at a sign from Sir Strange. The old magistrate at once addressed the young girl in stern tones, saying:

"Here is your confederate, Miss Gascon, and he has made a full confession."

The young girl stared at Bat as if she had never seen him before, while he cried:

"Sir Strange Rodney, I confessed that I shot your son and no more. Don't be letting on that I brought the young lady into the business at all, as I swore to you that I don't know her."

The young girl kept staring at Bat in the meantime, and she then cried:

"I cannot understand what you mean, Sir Strange Rodney, as that youth is a stranger to me."

"And that youth is lying, Sir Strange Rodney!" cried a clear, harsh voice at the open window, "as he no more shot your son than I did."

All eyes were at once turned to the high, open window, where a strange, weird figure was presented to them. Standing outside on the balcony was the tall gypsy woman, with her gaunt figure drawn up to its full height, and her large staff held before her in a threatening attitude. Her fiery eyes were glaring into the library, and they were fixed on the young woman at the moment as she continued:

"That youth did not shoot your son, Sir Strange, and he is lying for a purpose."

As the old woman uttered the last words she advanced into the library with a stately tread, while Sir Strange greeted her in ironical tones, saying:

"Welcome, my Irish Meg Merrilies. You always come when trouble is over my house."

Holding the staff out before her, the old creature glared at Sir Strange in a very peculiar manner as she replied, in stern tones:

"My name is Mag Morrison, Sir Strange Rodney, as I have told you before, and I will have none of your nicknames, good or bad. If I have come to you in sorrow, I have also been with you in joy, and I am here now to save you from committing a grave error."

The old magistrate sighed heavily as he responded in sad and kindly tones, saying:

"I wish you had come in time to save my brave son from death, Mag."

"Would that I had, Sir Strange. Are you certain the young man has breathed his last?"

"He is now in his winding sheet, Mag, and you must cry the death-song over him."

"I will do that same, Sir Strange, but we must first find his slayer."

"Why, this young fellow here has confessed that he shot my son, Mag."

Without appearing to heed the statement, the old woman turned suddenly on the young girl, and abruptly demanded:

"Have you a brother, young lady?"

Before the young girl could reply, Bat Moran interposed, saying:

"Good Mag, what is the use in your interfering for me, as I have owned up, and I'll stick to it, that it was I shot Captain Rodney."

Without heeding the interruption, the old gypsy seized the girl's arm and she again demanded:

"Young lady, have you a brother?"

Henrietta trembled under the old woman's grasp, as she replied:

"I have no brother, madam."

"What is your name?"

Bat Moran again interfered, as he impatiently cried:

"Let the young lady alone, Mag. What is it to you whether she has a brother or not?"

The old gypsy cast a fierce frown on the young fellow as she retorted:

"It may be a great deal to you, though, Bat Moran, and you are a born fool. If you want to die for another I won't stand it, as I ever mind that my life is yours, and I will freely die to save you."

The old woman then turned to Sir Strange and earnestly demanded:

"Did you ever know me to lie, Sir Strange?"

"I never did, Mag, although you have often been a bird of ill-omen to me."

"I have only warned you when evil was at hand, Sir Strange."

"Then I pray that you keep your warnings to yourself hereafter, as they always come true."

The old woman pointed her staff at Bat Moran as she cried:

"One more warning I must give you, and that is beware how you condemn the innocent, no matter what lying confession he may make."

The young fellow shook his hand at the old woman as he cried:

"How dare you say I am lying, Mag, when I say that I shot Captain Rodney?"

"Because I know you are, silly lad. You would save the pretty lady here, but I won't have it."

"Meddling old hag!" cried a fierce voice at the window. "Keep to your own business or I'll silence you forever!"

Then into the library sprang Captain Racket, holding a pistol in each hand.

The old smuggler's eyes were blazing with rage as he strode toward old Mag and presented one of the weapons at her head, crying:

"Do you want me to kill you?"

The old woman never faltered an inch as she replied, in brave tones:

"Shoot me if you will, madam, but you will never frighten me into silence where wrongdoing is to be exposed and crime prevented."

Sir Strange Rodney had drawn back a step or two on the entrance of the excited intruder, at whom he stared in amazement.

The old smuggler was dressed in the rough of a fisherman, with an old sou'wester pulled down almost over his eyes, and his huge beard hiding his lower features.

When the rough man presented the weapon at old Mag's head, Sir Strange drew a pistol and aimed it at him, in turn, as he cried:

"Down with that weapon, you rascal! Who are you that intrudes in my house in this manner?"

The old smuggler did lower his weapon as he turned on Sir Strange, crying:

"No matter to you who I am. I am here to see fair play given to that young lady, as I knew her good father well in Spain. The lad here confesses that he shot your son, and that's all there is about it, so far as Miss Gascon is concerned."

The brave old magistrate still kept his weapon pointed at the rough intruder, with his sharp eyes fixed on him at the same time, as he said:

"If I mistake not, you are the famous smuggler known as Captain Racket?"

The smuggler laughed in a jeering manner ere he replied: "And what if I am, Sir Strange Rodney? Do you propose to take me now?"

"I should arrest you for daring to intrude here as you have done, but——"

"You think better of it," interrupted the smuggler, with a sneer, "and you are wise, Sir Strange. That young man confesses that he shot your son, and that clears the young lady. Out of here, you meddling old hag, or I'll fling you out over the balcony."

The threat was scarcely uttered when Mag sprang at the smuggler and dealt him a blow with the staff that sent him reeling out of the open window, as she cried:

"You are not my master, Rod Racket, as I will soon show you."

The fierce old woman was about to follow up the attack, when Bat Moran seized her by the arms and forced her back, crying:

"You must not hurt the captain while I am present, Mam, as I won't stand it."

The old woman tore herself away from the young man's grasp, and turned on him with the stick uplifted, crying:

"I'll give it to you also, Bat Moran."

The young man faced the enraged gypsy with a smile on his genial face as he replied:

"Crack away at me, Mag, as much as you like, but you can't strike the captain again while I am to the fore."

Old Mag glared at the young fellow for a few moments and then turned on the young girl, crying:

"What is that strange girl to you, that you would save her by having yourself hung? I say that she shot Captain Rodney."

"And I say that it is an infernal lie!" cried the young fellow.

"And I swear that it is an infernal lie!" cried another voice at the open window.

All eyes were at once turned in that direction, while the young girl gasped forth:

"It is Captain Rodney's ghost!"

The old magistrate uttered a cry of joy as he sprang to the figure at the window, exclaiming:

"It is my son in his winding sheet, but it is not a ghost, thank heaven!"

And it proved to be the old magistrate's son, alive. Great was his appearance greeted by his father. After explanations were given all round Captain Rodney placed Bat Moran under arrest and left the room. Presently the old smuggler was seen entering the room and he accosted the old magistrate with the order to release Bat Moran from custody. The magistrate refused to so, whereupon Captain Racket went to the window, blew three blasts from a whistle and accosted the young girl with the words:

"Retire, miss, as this is no place for you."

Then Captain Rodney drew his sword and addressed the old smuggler, saying:

"I arrest you in the name of the king, Captain Racket."

Several followers of the old smuggler now entered the room. Then Bat Moran was seized by the smugglers and taken away with them. Mag left the room by way of the window as she flung back at Sir Strange Rodney:

"Note the girl well, and see if she does not remind you of one who was dear to you in days gone by."

CHAPTER VI.—The New Cabin Boy.

Bat Moran was not in a very pleasant humor, as he retreated with the smugglers that night.

For the first time in his brief career he felt ashamed of himself, of his occupation, and of his rough companions as well.

Although smuggling was looked upon as a serious crime by the English government, the people along the coast of Ireland did not regard it in that light, as they were only too glad to encourage any acts tending to baffle the officers of the law. While the smugglers were rough fellows in their way, they were honest and free-hearted in their dealings with the poor people, who were always ready to shelter and aid them when attacked by their enemies.

Bat Moran was of an adventurous turn of mind, and he dearly loved a life on the ocean wave. From his earliest boyhood he had been familiar with the smugglers of the Shannon, and when he received an offer to serve as cabin-boy under the famous Captain Racket, the simple lad believed that he was on the high road to fame and fortune.

And right faithfully did he serve the smuggler captain, in the full hope that he would one day command a neat craft of his own in the unlawful trade and defy the English cutters as Captain Racket had done.

The scenes of that night served to change all the day dreams of the young man, however, and he now looked on his occupation with dislike, if not with disgust, while he was compelled to regard Captain Racket as a designing knave, if he was not even worse.

The old smuggler appeared to notice that this former cabinboy was in an ugly frame of mind, and as they moved along the bank of the river toward the cave he seized him by the arm and held him back until the others were out of hearing as he said to him:

"What is the trouble now, my lad? You do not dance at escaping from the sharks."

The young fellow did not respond readily, but held down his head as if brooding over something, while the rough captain continued:

"Why in such glum humor, Bat? Are you provoked for being found out as a smuggler?"

Instead of replying to the question the young fellow looked earnestly up into the old smuggler's face as he asked:

"Is she really your daughter, captain?"

The old savage frown appeared on the face of the smuggler captain as he rejoined:

"Of course she is my daughter. Why do you ask the question now?"

"Because I have been puzzling my brain to know why the young lady is up at the hall."

The old smuggler grasped the young man by both shoulders and fiercer still was the frown on his rough face as he said:

"Then don't puzzle your brain about her any more, or you and I will fall out. Remember your solemn promise to me and forget that you ever saw her before."

Captain Racket then strode on after his fellows, and he did not address another word to Bat Moran until the large cave was reached.

Captain Racket then took the young fellow by the shoulder and drew him into an inner apartment, where a small lamp was burning, and where a youth in the garb of a sailor was reclining on a small bed. The youth sprang up from the bed on the entrance of the others, and he at once addressed Captain Racket in pleasant tones, crying:

"I am so glad you are back, father. Will we go on board the vessel now, as I don't like this dark place?" The old smuggler patted the youth on the shoulder in a very affectionate manner, as he replied:

"Presently, presently, my son. I want to make you acquainted with one of my lads. This is Bat Moran, the former cabin boy I spoke to you about."

The young stranger at once held out his hand to Bat in the most friendly manner, saying:

"I am very glad to meet you, Bat Moran, as father here has been telling me about you."

The Irish lad seized the hand thus offered to him and returned the friendly pressure as he replied:

"And it is glad I am to know you, my lad."

As Bat Moran spoke he kept gazing earnestly at the face of the young stranger, and then said to himself:

"Thunder alive, but isn't he the dead image of his sister! What does the captain mean at all by bringing them here, and I never to know before that he had a son at all, or a daughter, either, for that matter, until the night when the Molly Asthore went down?"

As if in answer to the mental question, the old smuggler captain drew his former cabin boy aside as he whispered to him:

"Isn't he like the young lady?"

"He is that, sir."

"Do you think he will pass as the boy you saved from drowning, even with old Mag Morrison?"

"I think he will, captain, but you must remember, whatever you are up to, that old Mag has awful keen eyes entirely."

The old smuggler frowned again as he rejoined:

"Confound her, I know she has, but we must

make the venture with her for all that. Now listen to me, Bat Moran, and heed me well."

"I am listening, sir."

"You played a brave part to-night, and I won't forget you for it. In the first place, I am going to offer you a position as second mate on board the new Molly Asthore."

"I am very thankful, sir, but——"

"None of your buts or ifs, until I am through with what I have to say. You will take a position on board the new craft as second mate, and you will be my confidential friend here after in the bargain. Now let me ask you a few plain questions."

"I am ready to answer them, sir."

"You think a great deal of that young lady whom you were willing to risk your life to serve to-night?"

"It is only natural, captain, that I should have some regard for one whose life I saved, not that I want to boast about it at all."

"I understand that, Bat. Well, I don't say that it is a crime to admire my daughter, but I warn you that that is all the good it will ever do you. If I was an infernal rogue I might tempt you to aid her and me by holding out a certain promise to you, but I despise such tricks with a friend. However, I will tell you candidly that I will need your aid in her behalf. Are you willing and ready to serve her without further explanations on my part?"

The young man hesitated to reply—not that he feared to enlist in behalf of the young lady, but he had already made up his mind to leave the smugglers, and he did not care to compromise himself by accepting the position as mate, although he was ready to serve the captain's daughter.

Captain Racket did not understand his hesitation, and he demanded:

"What! are you afraid to pledge yourself in behalf of my daughter, or do you want me to promise you her hand in marriage as a reward for your services?"

The young man smiled openly as he replied in candid tones:

"I would be a great fool, Captain Racket, if I had such a notion as that. I did have another notion in my head, but, as you make the proposition to me, I will put it aside. Here is my hand on it that I will serve you and your daughter through thick and thin, and I will never ask you any foolish questions about her, either."

The old smuggler's eyes sparkled with joy as he grasped the young fellow's hand and replied:

"That's spoken like a man. Now, the first thing to do is to deceive old Mag, and I hear her voice outside now. Remember that this is the lad you saved on the night when the Molly Asthore went down, and his name is Henry. He will play his part right, never fear."

As the old captain spoke he stepped out into the outer cave, followed by the new cabin boy.

Bat Moran walked after them, rubbing his head and staring at the young stranger, as he said to himself:

"Murder alive, but this is a queer world, and what strange things are happening to me of late. How do I know but this is another young girl, and what can the captain be up to with the two of them at all?"

The old gypsy woman was standing before the

fire in the outer cave, and many of the smugglers were gathered around her talking in friendly strains, when the captain and the new cabin boy entered.

The old gypsy cast one glance alone at the old smuggler captain, when her eyes fell on the cabin boy and she started back, crying:

"Who have we here now, Roderick Racket?"

Without waiting for a reply the old creature sprang forward, seized the young lad by the arms in a kindly manner and drew him into the full light of the fire, while she kept staring into his face, as she continued:

"It is wonderful, it is wonderful. Captain Racket, who is this lad?"

A pleasant smile appeared on the face of the rough smuggler, as he responded:

"That is my son, Mag, and his name is Henry. You saw him once before on the night when the old Molly Asthore went down."

The young lad stared in turn at the old woman, and a genial smile appeared on his handsome face, as he said:

"Yes, yes, this is the kind old woman who nursed me on that fearful night. My good woman, I feel ever so much obliged to you for your kindness that night."

Bat Moran was watching the youngster from a corner of the cave, and he was compelled to smile also, as he said to himself:

"May the old boy fly away with me if he isn't a clever lad. I'd give one of my eyes to-night to know what game the captain is up to."

Old Mag appeared to be satisfied with her scrutiny of the lad, as she said to him:

"Don't mention the little kindness I did to you, lad, for I am not your father's old friend?"

The old gypsy woman then advanced to the old smuggler, and drew him aside as she whispered into his ear:

"If that is your son, Rod Racket, what is the young lady up at the Hall to you?"

"She is only the daughter of a friend in Cadiz, Mag."

The old gypsy woman shook her head in a significant manner, and stern was the gaze fixed on the old smuggler as she rejoined:

"Rod Racket, you are up to some deep game, and I know it. Are you not satisfied with the deeds of the past, and why will you still keep the old sore open?"

Before the smuggler captain could reply one of his men who had been acting as a sentinel outside, ran into the cave, crying.

"The land and sharks are on us in force, captain, and they come from each side of the beach."

Captain Racket turned away from old Mag and addressed his men, crying:

"See to your arms, lads and out with that fire. Stand by me and we will defy the sharks."

Bat Moran seized a cutlass and a pair of pistols, and sprang to the side of the new cabin-boy, as he said to him:

"Stand behind me, my lad, and I will take care of you if we come to blows."

At that moment a dark form appeared at the entrance of the cave, while a loud voice rang out, crying:

"Surrender, in the name of the law, Captain Racket, or we will shoot you down like dogs."

It was old Sir Strange Rodney who thus entered

the cave, followed by a strong force of soldiers whose bayonets gleamed in the light of the fire.

Before the old smuggler could thunder forth the defiance that was forming on his lips, the old gypsy woman sprang out before Sir Strange and the soldiers, crying:

"Hold there for a moment, I pray you, Sir Strange Rodney, before you commence the cruel bloodshed."

The gallant old magistrate waved his sword to the old woman as he cried:

"Stand aside, noble queen, or your royal body will receive an injury. Down with your arms, Knights of the Tub, or we will be compelled to send a few leaden messengers into you."

The old gypsy did step aside, while Captain Racket made a motion to three of his men, who were holding buckets in their hands.

The smugglers at once dashed the water on the fire, their captain giving a loud, hasty order at the same moment.

"Guard the entrance and light torches!" yelled Sir Strange Rodney.

At that moment a single musket exploded in the dark, and it was followed by a cry of pain.

The scampering of many feet was then heard at the back part of the cave, and the voice of the old magistrate rang out, also crying:

"Hasten with the torches until we charge on the rascals. Stand close together, soldiers, and let no one pass out."

A dead silence prevailed in the cave, and a few moments after two soldiers entered therein, bearing torches.

The old magistrate cast one glance around and he could only perceive the old gypsy woman and two other forms, as the captain smuggler and his followers had disappeared.

The old magistrate advanced with his soldiers, and he soon recognized Bat Moran kneeling on the ground and holding an insensible lad to his breast.

The light from the torch flashed on the face of the insensible lad, while Bat Moran looked up at the old magistrate with tearful eyes as he exclaimed:

"For heaven's sake send for a doctor, sir, as I am in dread that this poor lad has received a bad wound. Mag, good Mag, come here and tend to him."

It was the new cabin-boy who was thus stricken down by the stray bullet.

CHAPTER VII.—Sir Strange is Puzzled.

Sir Strange Rodney paid very little attention to the wounded lad at first, as he hastened to give orders to the soldiers to search the cave for the smugglers, taking good care to have the main entrance well guarded at the same time.

He also sent some of his force out to watch the shore, fearing that the slippery fellow may slip away from him by means of some secret passage from the cave.

The old gypsy woman at once flew to the side of the wounded lad, who was reclining in Bat Moran's arms, and she soon discovered that the stray bullet had lodged in his right breast.

Old Mag Morrison was almost the last of a clan of gypsies who had settled on the banks of the Shannon more than a hundred years before the

period of which we write, and she was known to all the country around as one highly skilled in the use of medicine.

While she was mixed up with the smugglers and other lawless characters, old Mag bore an excellent reputation, as she was never known to commit a cruel act, and she was ever ready to doctor and nurse the poor people who were too poverty-stricken to pay for medical attendance.

Many feared the old gypsy woman from the fact that she sometimes indulged in fortune-telling, and many of her prophecies were fulfilled. Before the wounded lad recovered from the swoon into which he had fallen, the skilful old creature had extracted the bullet from his breast. She was in the act of dressing the wound when Sir Strange advanced toward her, crying:

"Well, my Irish Meg Merriles, and how is your patient now?"

The old woman turned up her face to the old magistrate as she retorted:

"Did I not tell you before, and often at that, Sir Starnge, that my name is Mag Morrison?"

The old magistrate chuckled to himself, and then replied:

"And have I not told you, good Mag, that I call you Meg Merriles because a clever Scotchman, whose name is unknown, has written about a woman who may be a sister of yours from the description he has given of her, and whom he has called Meg Merriles.

"Was she good or bad, sir?"

"She was both bad and good, but she ended her life by dying to save the son of a house whose life was threatened by just such another character as your friend, Captain Racket."

"Captain Racket is no friend of mine, Sir Strange. But that is not here nor there now. Look at the fact of this lad and tell me who he resembles."

Sir Strange Rodney did stare down at the face of the wounded lad who was still reclining in the arms of young Bat Moran, and he at once started back in great surprise, as he exclaimed:

"Whom have we here, Mag? Is it possible that it is the young lady I left at the house half an hour ago when I hastened away for the soldiers?"

Old Mag bent her gaze at the mysterious lad also, while Bat Moran replied:

"That cannot be possible, Sir Strange, as that lad was here before me half asleep when I returned with Captain Racket and his men.

The old magistrate then bent his stern gaze on the speaker as he asked:

"Are you not the young fellow who was lately a prisoner, and are you not a smuggler?"

The honest lad knew that his liberty was in danger, yet he promptly replied:

"I was your prisoner lately, sir, and I am one of the smugglers."

"Then you will be my prisoner again. Is that lad seriously wounded, Mag?"

"I think not, sir, but you can see that he is young and delicate. Do you notice the resemblance he bears to the young lady known as Miss Gascon?"

"I do, and it is remarkable. Who is he, and why is he here with the smugglers?"

Bat Moran lifted the handsome youth to one of the benches with old Mag's assistance, as he replied:

"The lad will answer for himself, sir."

A heavy step was heard in the inner cave at the moment, then out sprang the smuggler captain, crying:

"I will answer that question, Sir Strange Rodney. That lad is my son, and he is the cabin-boy on board my new craft, known as the Molly Asthore."

As the rough man spoke he bent down over the wounded lad, who looked up into his eyes as he pressed his hand and muttered aloud:

"Dear father, I thought you would not forsake me."

The soldiers made a rush at the old smuggler, when the old gypsy woman sprang before them, crying:

"Sir Strange Rodney, I warn you not to attack a father when he is bending over his wounded son, or you may meet with the same fate some day."

The old magistrate motioned the soldiers back almost on the instant, as he cried, aloud:

"Do not disturb the fellow now, as he cannot escape us."

The rough old smuggler did not appear to pay any attention to the words or acts of those around him, as he whispered to his son:

"Are you badly wounded, dear Harry?"

"I think not, good father, as that kind old woman has been doctoring me."

"Do you think you could bear it if I offered to take you away in my arms?"

"I think so, sir, but they will attack you if you attempt it."

A scornful smile appeared on the face of the old smuggler, as he suddenly seized his son in his arms and replied to him:

"If they attempt to slay me their blood will flow like water."

He then lifted the lad in his strong arms and sprang toward the inner cave, crying:

"Stop me at your peril, Sir Strange Rodney."

The movement was so quick and sudden that the daring man reached the inner cave before any of the soldiers offered to stop him, while the old magistrate cried:

"Out with you, soldiers, and guard the shore. The rogues will attempt to escape by some secret path outside, and then we will at them on open ground."

During the excitement of the moment the speaker seemed to forget Bat Moran, and the gypsy whispered to him, saying:

"Back with you after the captain, my lad, and I will soon be with you."

The young lad did take hint, and he was springing back toward the inner cave when Sir Strange drew a pistol and aimed it at him, crying:

"Halt there, or I will bring you down!"

Again did the old gypsy woman spring to the rescue of her young friend, and she faced Sir Strange with flashing eyes, crying:

"You will slay me ere you touch the lad with bullet or steel."

An impatient and passionate expression burst from the old magistrate as he advanced on the old gypsy woman, crying:

"Out of the way, you old hag, or you will tempt me to forget the past."

A mocking laugh burst from old Mag ere she replied in derisive tones:

"You can never forget the past, Sir Strange Rodney, it is impressed on your soul, never to be wiped away. If you desire to attack the smugglers of the Shannon, sail out with your gallant son, and I promise that they will soon meet you again on the high seas."

The old magistrate appeared to be a little confounded by the words and actions of the brave old gypsy, but he soon retorted, saying:

"My gallant son is now away to the bay to sail out in his cutter in search of the smuggling craft. But I am ready to fight them on the land if they will dare show their faces. I warn you and your friends, Mag, that we will tolerate them no more on this coast. Let us out now, soldiers, and see if we cannot get a chance at them outside. I will blow this infernal cave up ere long, and then the smuggling rats will have to come out of their hole."

As the brave old fellow spoke he led the soldiers out of the cave without making any attempt to molest the mysterious old gypsy woman. Old Mag watched the soldiers as they retreated out of the cave and she then chuckled aloud as she muttered to herself, saying:

"There is blood on the moon tonight, I fear, and Captain Rod Racket will soon be in dire trouble. Who can that strange lady be who resembles the wounded lad so much, and is it possible that they are one and the same person?"

Before the old gypsy woman could work out the puzzle in her mind, Sir Strange Rodney's voice was heard outside, crying:

"Meg Merriles, Meg Merriles, come out here and solve this puzzle. Here is the lady we were speaking about a few moments ago."

Old Mag Morrison did hurry out muttering to herself:

"Confound him, and why will he keep calling me after the old Scotch woman who died in saving the youth she loved. It is a bad omen for me and it may be for him, as there is red blood on the moon to-night."

When the old gypsy woman did reach the stand outside she found the young lady known as Henrietta Gascon, dressed in a riding habit and seated on a handsome horse. The animal showed signs of having recently performed a swift journey, and the young lady's face was all aglow with excitement as she addressed Sir Strange Rodney, crying:

"Excuse me for taking one of your horses, Sir Strange, but I heard that you are going to have a fight with the smugglers, and I was anxious to witness the fray."

As the young lady spoke two of the soldiers bearing torches flashed their lights on her animated face, and Sir Strange stared at her in amazement ere he drew back and addressed the old gypsy woman in mystified tones, saying:

"The resemblance is remarkable, Mag, and it puzzles me sorely. Whom does she now remind you of in the days that have gone by?"

The old gypsy woman was staring at the brilliant face of the lady on horseback, and a deep sigh escaped from her as she answered:

"Who can she remind me of, Sir Strange, but the lost one? It puzzles me as much as it does you, but the mystery must soon be revealed."

The fair lady on horseback did not appear to

heed the notice she was attracting, as she then addressed Sir Strange again, saying:

"Then I am afraid, sir, that I am too late to witness the struggle with the smugglers. Have they escaped to their ship?"

The old magistrate advanced toward the young lady as he replied in somewhat dignified tones:

"I cannot say, Miss Gascon, but I can assure you that this is not the time and place for a young lady, and I beg of you to return to the hall, as I will send an escort of soldiers with you."

A shrill whistle was heard from the cliff above at the moment, and the old magistrate cried:

"The rascals are giving us the slip by the cliff paths, and we will not have time to catch them. Where are you riding to, Miss Gascon?"

The strange young lady darted up the steep cliff on the spirited horse at the moment, and a ringing laugh rang out ere she replied:

"The horse is running away with me, but I will soon get him under control, and strike out on the main road."

Then away up the cliff went horse and rider, like a flash, and the puzzled old magistrate turned to the gypsy woman, saying:

"Confound me, Mag, if I don't think she is away to meet the smugglers. Let us after her, soldiers, as fast as we can, and we may be in time to get a shot at the sly rascals."

The soldiers then darted up the steep cliff with the old magistrate, but Mag Morrison sprang into the cave again with hasty strides and chuckled once more ere she muttered aloud:

"Sir Strange is puzzled, but I commence to read the riddle, and a short cut under the cliff will take me to my retreating friends before the soldiers can hope to overtake them."

The young lady on horseback dashed recklessly up the steep cliff, making such splendid headway that the soldiers and the old magistrate were soon left far behind. Striking on a winding path leading out into the dense wood beyond, the fair rider drew forth a small whistle and sent out a cry somewhat similar to that heard by Sir Strange and the soldiers. The signal was responded to from the wood, and the young lady dashed fearlessly forward until she entered the dark path, where a rough voice soon hailed her, crying:

"Who comes there?"

"A friend from Spain," was the ready answer. "My dear, what possessed you to undertake this mad freak?"

"I was alarmed for you, dear father, as I heard you were to be attacked by sea and land."

A low mocking laugh burst from the bold smuggler as he led the horse through the wood and replied:

"They may attack me by sea and land and through the air as well, my dear, but your father will not be beaten until he has accomplished his object."

The swift horse dashing up the cliff did not make better time than the old gypsy woman. On through the dense wood went the smuggler captain and the young girl on horseback. In a little while they reached a small cove in which four boats were lying. In one of the boats sat the wounded cabin boy and at his side was Bat Moran, who was supporting the wounded youth in a very tender manner. Just then the old smuggler and the young lady appeared above the scene.

The smugglers in the boats noticed that their captain was remonstrating with the young lady, who had dismounted from her horse as if about to embark in one of the boats, as the old smuggler was about to put out. But the old smuggler seized the young lady and placed her on her horse again, as he said:

"Away with you. Go back to the hall."

Just then Mag Merriles appeared before them, crying:

"I will guide the sweet lady to Rodney Hall if she will place herself under my guidance."

But the girl still sat her horse as Captain Racket entered a boat and they all put off. During a conversation between old Mag and the girl, the old woman turned to her saying:

"Was it you who fired the shot at Captain Rodney?"

"No, I did not fire at him, but I know who did, and will not betray him."

Then who should appear from a clump of bushes but Sir Strange Rodney himself as he said:

"I will now place you under arrest, young woman until I learn who you are and what game you are playing."

CHAPTER VIII.—A Very Mad Act.

The young lady calling herself Henrietta Gascon was standing beside the good horse when Sir Strange appeared so suddenly before herself and the old gypsy woman. The old magistrate advanced as he spoke as if to lay violent hands on the young lady, when the aggressive gypsy interposed herself between them and pushed him back, as she cried:

"Patience, patience, Sir Strange, and do not be violent with this young lady."

Sir Strange appeared to lose control of his temper altogether on being thus opposed, and he pointed his sword at old Mag, as he cried, in hoarse, and threatening tones:

"Get aside with you, mad woman, or I'll do you an injury on the instant. That young woman is a spy and a traitor, and she will become my prisoner."

Old Mag held her ground as she flourished her large staff above her head and cried:

"You know that it is little I care for your sword, Sir Strange Rodney. You will not lay hand on this bonnie lady as an enemy while I stand alive before her."

The old magistrate drew back as if either afraid of encountering the warlike old creature, or being ashamed of himself for his display of temper, and he then cried, in calmer tones:

"I do not wish to lay violent hands on her, but she will not escape me, as I overheard her declare that she was in league with that pirate smuggler against us. Out, soldiers, and see that she does not escape."

About a dozen soldiers instantly appeared on the path leading from the wood to the cave, thus blocking all means of retreat in that quarter on the part of the young woman. The horse and its rider were standing almost at the edge of the water at the end of the cove, on each side of which were high rocks leading to the river beyond. While the soldiers did not attempt to advance to seize the young woman, they guarded the path so

that it would be impossible for her to escape to the wood unless by bursting through them. When the old magistrate's rage had somewhat expended itself he addressed the old gypsy again, saying:

"Stand aside, Mag, as I seek no quarrel with you. I will speak to this young lady."

The old gypsy did draw aside on being thus addressed, but she made a sign to Henrietta at the same time as if she meant to say:

"Fear not, as I will be your friend."

The young lady stood with one hand on the saddle of the horse and the other holding the rein, as the old squire advanced and stood before her, saying:

"I heard you declare, young lady, that my son was a wicked and a cruel man, and that he deserved shooting at your hands. If such was your opinion of him, why did you come to my house as a guest?"

The young woman drew herself up in a proud manner as she replied:

"I refuse to give you my motive for going to your house as a guest, Sir Strange Rodney, but I will say that when I entered there I was not aware that he was such a vile and treacherous wretch."

The old gentleman's face flushed with indignation and anger as he retorted, saying:

"I cannot believe what you say now, as I heard you confess to Mag Morrison that you were aware who attempted to shoot my son. In good truth I regard you as a spy in behalf of Captain Racket, and I believe you are in league with the person who shot my son, if you did not commit the deed yourself. Therefore I will place you under arrest again."

"The young lady bowed as she asked, in sarcastic tones:

"Will you permit me to ride this horse to the prison, sir?"

"Certainly, and the soldiers will escort you there. Do not interfere, Mag."

The young lady sprang lightly on the saddle, while the old gypsy advanced again, crying:

"Sir Strange Rodney, you will regret this mad act and weep scalding tears for it yet."

Without heeding old Mag's warning the old magistrate raised his voice and cried to the soldiers:

"Advance, men, and lead this young lady to the nearest jail."

A mocking laugh burst from the young girl, and she struck the spirited horse with her riding-whip at the same moment. The spirited animal made a sudden bound, but not in the direction of the soldiers. While the daring girl was in the act of striking the horse with one hand, she wheeled him around with the other, and out into the waters of the cove he dashed, while her ringing laugh burst forth again as she cried:

"You will never send me to prison, Sir Strange Rodney, as I would perish in the waves outside first."

Cries of surprise, consternation and alarm burst from the old magistrate and the soldiers as they saw the daring girl plunge out into the cove, the waters of which grew deeper and deeper, until the spirited animal was soon swimming out between the high rocks. Then loud and clear rang out the old gypsy's voice as she cried to the young girl:

"Come back, come back, you mad lassie, and all will be well. Oh, but she has the wild strain in her, and she will rush to her doom."

The fearless girl did not attempt to turn the horse's head back, but faced him out into the open water, as she cried aloud:

"I go to seek my friends outside or to perish in the waves. Sir Strange Rodney, I will defy you in death, and with my last words I will declare that your son is the vilest wretch on earth today!"

As the mad creature uttered the last words, the dark forms of the horse and its rider disappeared from the cove outside the high rocks, and they were swept down toward the mouth of the broad river. The cove was so situated that it was impossible for the spectators to hasten at once in order to ascertain the fate of the mad young creature. The high, rugged rocks at each side of the inlet also extended up and down the shore for some distance, thus rendering it impossible for the squire and the soldiers to gain the bank of the river without making a detour around to the strand by the very path which they had taken when in pursuit of the smugglers from the cave. The old magistrate appeared to be thoroughly overcome by the unexpected result of his own actions, and he turned to the old gypsy woman, as he cried in the most despairing tones:

"Oh, Mag, Mag! how could I foresee this? You are clever and wise, and tell me what is to be done now, I beg of you, to save her?"

The old gypsy woman did not reply in words, but she darted off to the right and commenced climbing the steep cliffs with an agility that was surprising for one of her years. The old magistrate, in his desperation, attempted to follow the active old creature, as he cried aloud to the soldiers:

"Down with your guns and follow me. Gracious goodness, how did she ever get up there?"

As the old fellow spoke, he lost his footing on the steep cliff and fell back into the arms of two of the soldiers. Old Mag was then on the top of the cliff, from whence she could look out over the broad waters, and a mocking laugh burst from her ere she cried:

"I defy the best among you to follow me now. I go to save the bright lassie, if she is to be saved in this world. Follow me who will dare, and I will laugh at your efforts."

Old Mag then disappeared from the top of the cliff, bounding down on the other side with the same agility as she had ascended.

Several of the soldiers attempted to climb, but they all met the fate of Sir Strange. The old magistrate then ordered his whole force to hasten around to the strand at the nearest point possible to be gained, and he then groaned to himself, saying:

"Was the wretched girl really mad to thus brave death? Would that I had followed old Mag's advice, as I am strongly interested in the beautiful young creature."

When Sir Strange did reach the strand with the soldiers he could not get a glimpse of either the young girl, the horse, or the old gypsy woman, although he caused his soldiers to run up the strand, waving blazing torches.

"The fair young creature has perished," moaned

the old man, "but what has become of our Irish Meg Merriles? I will call aloud for her."

He did call aloud, but no response came to it; and as he looked out toward the dark waters he groaned forth:

"She has perished, and I am her murderer. Why did I not heed old Mag's advice and treat her in a more gentle manner?"

When Henrietta Gascon faced the spirited horse out into the cove, her only thought for the moment was to escape the prison, as she had a fearful horror of being confined in any place of the kind. She did not entertain a hope of being able to follow the boats out to the bay, but she had some idea of being able to find a landing-place lower down near the village, from whence she could procure some small craft to bear her away to her father's vessel.

The young girl was sick and tired of the work she was set to do in Ireland. She hated Captain Pierce Rodney, and she feared the old magistrate, who could be so pleasant at times, and yet so stern and unrelenting at the next moment. On reaching the mouth of the cove, and when the spirited animal was swept into the current of the river, the young girl left him to his own guidance, as she had some experience of the instincts of animals, while she said to herself:

"Better to perish out here than to be dragged to a prison, but life is sweet yet and I will leave the good animal to guide me."

Being thus left to himself the powerful horse turned his head toward the shore again and struggled fearfully, as if intent on reaching a point not far below the cove. Henrietta stared up at the dark rocks, through which she could see an opening, and she muttered aloud:

"Is he foolish enough to attempt a landing on the rocks when he may be borne by the current to the strand below?"

At that very moment the sagacious animal struck into a narrow opening in the rocks, and great was the surprise of the young girl on finding herself borne into another small cove, which did not appear to have any inlet beyond. Greater still was Henrietta's surprise when she perceived a boat at the end of the cove, in which appeared to be several human forms.

It was evident that the persons in the boat did not perceive the horse and rider as they swept into the cove, but the snorting of the animal as he struck his feet on the sandy bottom at once attracted their attention, and a voice cried out:

"Who comes here?"

"It is a mermaid!" cried another voice, "and on horseback at that!"

"Be quiet!" cried the first speaker, as he sprang out of the boat and caught the bridge of the horse to draw them up on the dry sand. "As I live, it is Miss Henrietta Gascon!"

The speaker was Bat Moran, and he assisted the young lady to alight on the dry sand and he continued, saying:

"I beg your pardon, young lady; but how in the mischief did you come in here on a horse, at all?"

A merry laugh broke from the winsome creature ere she replied:

"Did you not see that we swam in, my good friend? But why are you here, and who are those with you?"

The wounded boy, who was reclining in a boat, raised his head at the moment and exclaimed:

"It is my dear sister, Henrietta!"

The young girl sprang into the boat and clasped the wounded boy in her arms.

"Dear Henry, how came you here, and you appear to be so ill?"

Some muttered explanations then followed, and the young girl learned that her brother had received a chance wound at the hands of the soldiers. She also learned that while they were bearing him away to the smuggling vessel he became very much weaker, when Captain Racket decided to send him back to the secret cove, at the end of which was a small cavern often used by the smugglers, and then to summon the old gypsy woman to his assistance.

CHAPTER IX.—Old Mag Is Mysterious.

Old Sir Strange Rodney and the soldiers lingered along the strand for several hours on that dark night, but they could not see any trace of the horse or his fair rider. Inquiries were also made at the village and along the shores on both sides early on the following morning, and with the same result.

When the old magistrate returned to the hall about noon on the following day, great was his surprise to find that the good horse which the young lady had ridden out of the cove was safe in the stable. He was found grazing in the field near the edge of the wood early in the morning, and he did not seem to suffer in the least from his adventure in the water on the previous night. Sir Strange then felt assured that the young lady had perished, and he upbraided himself all the more for his rude action at the cove.

Messengers were then dispatched in search of old Mag Morrison, as the old magistrate entertained some faint hope that she would give him some information regarding the fate of the young lady. The messengers could not succeed in finding any trace of the old gypsy woman, however, and Sir Strange groaned aloud again as he said to himself:

"My Irish Meg Merrilies has perished also by falling from the rocks into the sea, and I feel that some dark cloud is again over me and mine."

Captain Pierce Rodney returned to the hall in the evening, and fierce was his indignation, while intense appeared his grief as well, when he learned the fate of the beautiful young woman whom he professed to have loved dearer than his life. When the first burst of rage had subsided, the young officer turned on his father, saying:

"Did I not tell you, sir, that I intended to make the young lady my bride, no matter what her antecedents may have been?"

The bold old magistrate was appalled at the rage of his son, and he could only falter forth:

"I did but do my duty, my son, as I was assured that she was in league with the rascally smuggler, and I did not dream that she would thus destroy herself."

"What do I care, sir, if she were in league with all the smugglers and pirates on the coast, and that was all nonsense. She informed me that she was acquainted with Captain Racket in Cadiz, as her father had some trading connec-

tions with the fellow; but that does not make her in league with him in his actions on this coast. Oh, would that I had not gone out in quest of the rascal, and the dear creature would be alive now."

The eyes of the old magistrate brightened as he responded, saying:

"The young lady may not be dead after all, Pierce, and would to heaven that we could find Mag Morrison."

Father and son were seated in the library at the moment, and the wish was scarcely uttered when the tall form of the gypsy woman appeared at the window, while she cried, in sarcastic tones:

"Your Irish Meg Merrilies is here, Sir Strange. What do you seek of me now?"

Both father and son sprang up eagerly as if to embrace the old creature as an angel of good omen, while the young man cried:

"For pity sake, Mag, tell us that the young lady has not perished in the waves."

"Come in, come in, Mag," cried the old man, eagerly, "and I will bless you on my bended knee if you will tell us that she is not dead."

The old woman strode into the room, casting inquisitive glances at each of the men ere she stood before Captain Rodney and inquired:

"Did you encounter Captain Racket last night?"

"I did not, as the fellow gave me the slip outside. He has a fast craft under him now, and I am not likely to strike at him unless I intercept him in the bay."

A dark frown appeared on the gypsy's face as she thundered forth:

"Beware, beware, Captain Pierce Rodney, when you do strike at Rod Racket again, as there is blood on the moon, and I predict that you will not have an easy victory when you encounter the new Molly Asthore."

"That is not the question now, Mag," cried the old magistrate, impatiently. "Tell us if you know aught of the young lady known as Miss Gascon, and whether she is alive or dead."

The old gypsy chuckled in a perplexing manner as she responded, saying:

"What could I know of the young lady?"

"You may have seen her, good Mag, when you ascended the rocks last night," answered the old magistrate. "Oh, do not keep us in torture, but tell us, if you can, whether she is alive or dead."

"If she is dead, what then?" demanded the old woman, as she cast her penetrating eyes at each of the men before her.

The old magistrate stamped his foot impatiently as he replied:

"Why keep us in this suspense, Mag? If the young lady is dead we can only deplore her."

"And if she lives?" asked the gypsy.

"If she lives," replied Captain Rodney, in passionate tones, "she will be my bride."

With an impulsive movement the old gypsy woman sprang at the young officer and clasped her bony hands on his shoulder, dropping her long staff at the same time as she hissed forth:

"Far better—a thousand times better—that she should sleep beneath the waves than to live to become your bride, Captain Rodney. Peaceful as I am, I would plunge a dagger into her breast ere I would permit her to become your wife—if that were possible."

The last words were hissed forth in a whisper, so that the young man alone could hear them.

The words and the acts of the old gypsy woman had a fearful effect on Captain Rodney, as he staggered back from her grasp, while he glared at her in a startled manner as he gasped forth:

"What do you mean, Mag?"

"You know right well what I mean."

The old creature then turned on the old magistrate, saying:

"I will not tell you whether the young lady lives or not, but I will give you this warning: Should you ever meet her again, in life or death, kneel to her as you would to an angel and crave her pardon. You remember the youth that was wounded last night?"

"Yes, yes, Mag. What of him?"

"If you should chance to encounter him again, treat him in a kindly manner, although his hand may be raised against you and yours. More I will not say to either of you at present."

And the old creature was about to stride out of the room again through the window, when Sir Strange threw himself before her, crying:

"What means this mystery, Mag Morrison? You shall not leave this place until you tell me more, if I have to send you to jail."

"Yes, send her to jail for an old witch," cried Captain Pierce Rodney, as he sprang up from the chair and glared at the old woman in a savage manner. "Do not let her leave the house until she tells us about the young lady, as I am certain that she is alive now."

"Alive or dead, Pierce Rodney, you will never even touch her with your finger again while I have an arm to protect her. Yes, cast me into prison, if you dare, and then the red cloud around the moon will burst and blood will flow like rain."

"To the mischief with your threats, you old witch!" cried Captain Rodney, as he rang the bell in a violent manner.

Four or five servants rushed into the library at the moment and Captain Rodney cried to them:

"Seize that old hag and hold her fast."

The male servants made a rush at the old woman, when she swept her staff around her, and two of them were felled to the floor. Captain Rodney and the other closed in on her and seized her, while she struggled in a fierce manner, yelling aloud at the top of her voice:

"Have I no friends in Rodney Hall?"

The appeal was scarcely made when in through the open window sprang an active form, and the old magistrate was flung aside as a manly young voice answered:

"You have one here to strike for you, Mag!"

It was Bat Moran who had thus hastened to the rescue of the old gypsy woman, and close on his heels were two of his fellow-smugglers. Without waiting an instant to parley, the three smugglers set on Captain Rodney and the male servants, beating them away from the old gypsy woman in a few moments, old Mag taking part in the melee.

The young captain was sent sprawling into the corner of the library, half stunned by a blow given him by Bat Moran, and the male servants received some serious cuts before they retreated in terror. Then out of the window sprang old Mag Morrison and her friends, the former crying:

"Did I not tell you that there was blood on

the moon, and it has only commenced to flow. Sir Strange, beware of the hour when you turned your Irish Mag Merriles against you."

CHAPTER X.—Captain Rodney's Secret

Old Sir Strange Rodney was so excited over the struggle with the old gypsy woman and the smugglers that he appeared to forget all about his son. Summoning his armed male servants and calling on them to follow him, the old man rushed in pursuit of the fugitives without seeming to notice that Captain Rodney did not accompany him.

Over the lawn and into the park beyond the old man ran with his followers after him, and he was still so much excited in the pursuit that he did not once turn to inquire for his son.

Captain Rodney was half stunned by the blow he had received from Bat Moran, and when he did recover from it he found himself alone in the library. After staring around for a few moments, the young man strode out through the open window and sprang from the balcony, muttering:

"What could that confounded old hag of a gypsy mean, and is it possible that she knows my secret? That wretched girl will be my ruin yet, and I must silence her in some way."

The young captain entered the park in a different direction from that taken by his father, and he still acted like one who was not quite sound in his mind when he reached the bank of the broad river. Turning up the stream he was soon standing in front of a cottage, while he still kept muttering aloud:

"I must get rid of her in some way."

After hesitating a few moments, Captain Rodney entered the cottage without knocking on the door, and on finding no one to receive him he called aloud:

"Where are you, Maggie?"

A tall man in the garb of a gamekeeper, who had folled him silently through the park and into the cottage, then answered:

"Maggie is not here, but I am."

Captain Rodney turned abruptly on the young man, who was a powerful fellow with a dark, sinister countenance, and he asked in haughty tones:

"Where is Maggie, then?"

The gamekeeper, whose name was Phil Devine, and who had testified against Bat Moran, made answer in very surly tones, saying:

"I am not the girl's keeper. She goes and comes as she pleases. I want a blunt talk with you, sir, and this is my chance."

"What do you want to say to me?" asked the former.

"I want to settle with you about that shooting business and other matters as well," cried the rough fellow. "Just sit down if you don't mind."

Captain Rodney did take a seat near the table, and his manner was less agitated as he bent his eyes in a scowling manner on the man before him, while he demanded, in angry tones:

"Now, what have you to say? Please remember that I came here to see your sister and not to talk with you."

"I wish you had never come here to see my sister, but that is past and gone now, and we will get at the present and the future, after I have asked you a question or two."

"Who gave you the right to ask me questions?"

"Yourself, Captain Rodney. Do you know who fired the shot at you in the park that night?"

"It was your sister."

"Why don't you say 'my wife,' instead of your sister, as you know full well that Maggie is your lawful wife, and that you want her out of the way."

"You impudent scoundrel, have I not paid you well to keep that secret, and did you not swear that you would never mention it even to myself again!"

"To be sure, I did swear to keep the secret until the death of your father, but I didn't then bargain for your making up to a young lady and asking her to be your wife. Is it any wonder that Maggie went mad when she heard you with her own ears, and that she then tried to kill you on the spot before the young lady? Pshaw! I never dreamed of keeping the oath I made you under such circumstances."

"You treacherous dog, it was you who sent Maggie to spy on me, and it was you who gave her the weapon with which she tried to take my life. Blast your insolence and her folly, as I was only joking with the young lady you allude to, and I never meant to cast Maggie aside."

Another chuckle was indulged in by the young gamekeeper before he retorted, saying:

"Of course, then, it was only a joke on Maggie's part to fire on you when she heard you making the offer to the young lady. It was only a joke on her part, also, when she met that nice young lady afterwards and told her the truth concerning you and herself."

Captain Rodney sprang up from his seat and his face was flushed with rage as he demanded:

"Did the blasted fool do that? Was she mad enough to tell our secret to a stranger who would expose me to my father? Now I know how old Mag Morrison came to find it out, and I am ruined forever, as my father will be the next to hear it."

The young gamekeeper then sprang up from his chair also, and glared at the sailor as he demanded:

"And what if your father does know it?"

"What if he does know it, you blasted, pig-headed, evil-minded scoundrel! Do you not know that he can cut me off without a shilling if he dies tomorrow, and that he is just spiteful enough to do so if he learns the truth."

"You have only yourself to blame if your old father does hear the truth, as you had no business making love to that nice young lady, and Maggie and me were bound to stop you at all risks. Now what is that I heard you muttering about getting some one out of the way as you walked through the park like one in a nightmare?"

No braver man than Captain Rodney ever stood on the deck of a revenue cutter when in the performance of his duty, yet he quailed before the sinister eyes fixed on him at that moment, and he drew back with a shudder as he replied:

"I was in a nightmare, Phil, as we had a terrible time up at the Hall with old Mag Mor-

risson and the smugglers, and I received a blow on the head that must have injured my brain for the time."

The apology thus given was received with sneers by the young gamekeeper, who responded in his very blunt way, saying:

"I saw and heard all that passed up in the library, and I don't pity you for what you got, as I heard you then say to old Mag that you were going to make the foreign young lady your wife."

"Then you were spying on me."

"Of course, I was. When you give me good cause I mean to spy on you all the time and I promise you that you will never make up to any young lady without Maggie hearing it from me. Take my advice and stop all this nonsense by owning her as your lawful wife, and trust to luck for your father to forgive you."

The young captain shivered again, and shook his head in the most resolute manner as he replied:

"I won't do anything of the kind. I know my father better than you do, and I am certain that he would beggar me if I did it."

"Beggar you, indeed! Have you not your commission in the revenue service, if it comes to that, and why shouldn't you be proud to risk all and own Maggie as your wife? You know you need not be ashamed of her."

The cottage door was flung open at the instant and a young woman entered, crying:

"What loud talk is this in here? Does Captain Rodney speak of being ashamed of me?"

Each of the young men turned to salute the young woman, and as Captain Rodney gazed on her beautiful face, all glowing as it was with excitement at the moment, he impulsively exclaimed:

"Who could be ashamed of you, dear Maggie?"

The beautiful young woman was almost as dark as her brother, and a sneer like unto his appeared on her face as she answered:

"If you were not ashamed of me, you would have acknowledged me a year ago, as I am very certain now that your father would forgive you if he knew the truth."

"You are very much mistaken, Maggie," protested the young captain, in gentle tones. "My father knows that you are related to old Mag Morrison; that you are her granddaughter, in fact, and he would be fearfully enraged if he knew that I had married one who had gypsy blood in her veins."

A mocking laugh was heard outside the cottage at the moment, and then in strode the Irish Meg Merrilies, holding her large staff before her, while she bent her keen eyes on the young captain as she retorted:

"How do you know, Captain Pierce Rodney, that you have not gypsy blood in your veins yourself? Did you know your own mother?"

"Go hang yourself, you old hag, as you will never get me to believe such a yarn. How did you escape my father awhile ago, and are you not afraid to roam on our grounds again?"

"I roamed on your grounds, as you call them, many a long year before you were born, Pierce Rodney, and I will roam on them when you are cold in your grave, and that grave will be at the bottom of the sea. I will now ask you one question, and see that you use no more vile

language with me, or I will strike you to the floor."

The young officer shrugged his shoulders as if in contempt of the threat, as he asked:

"What is your question?"

"Will you come with me up to your father and own up that you are wedded to my granddaughter?"

Captain Rodney shook his head in a stubborn manner, and then replied:

"I will do nothing of the kind, you old hag."

"Then I will force you to do it."

As the old woman spoke the last words she sprang suddenly in on the young captain and seized him around the arms, while she cried aloud:

"In, my lads, and secure your prisoner. Phil Devine, keep your lips sealed as to what you see tonight, and you will follow us, Maggie."

The young sailor struggled to free himself from the strong grasp of the old woman, calling for help at the same time, but Bat Moran and the two other smugglers sprang into the cottage and secured him, closing his mouth with a gag at the same time. They then dragged him out to the bank of the river, where a small boat was ready to receive them. The prisoner was dragged into the boat, and his young wife followed him with a sad countenance as she muttered to herself:

"This is not of my seeking, but I must obey the old queen, and he deserves his fate."

CHAPTER XI.—The Challenge to a Conflict at Sea.

Captain Rodney was not only gagged, but he was blindfolded also, as the boat swept down the broad river, yet he felt perfectly safe, as he knew that his young wife was with him. The boat swept down into the mouth of the river, and the prisoner feared for a time that they were going to bear him out to sea, and hand him over to the smuggler captain, who had reason to have him so much.

A certain motion of the boat soon told him, however, that they were entering a bay or a cove, and he soon after felt the keel of the boat grating on the soft sand. The young captain was then led from the boat and into a small dark passage, at the end of which he could perceive a light breaking through the bandage on his eyes. That bandage was soon removed, and on staring around, Captain Rodney perceived three persons standing before him.

These persons were the old gypsy woman, his young wife, and the beautiful young foreign lady who was supposed to have perished in the waves. The gag was removed at the same time, and a cry of joy burst from Captain Rodney's lips as he recognized Henrietta Gascon, while he muttered:

"Thank fortune she is safe!"

His young wife noted that cry of joy, and her gypsy blood was on fire on the instant; but when she looked at the young lady and saw the look of scorn on her face she muttered to herself:

"Whatever he may think of her, it is evident that she despises him."

Old Mag Morrison commenced the conversa-

tion by addressing the young captain in sarcastic tones, saying:

"As you were so particular in your inquiries about this young lady, gallant captain, I thought it best to bring you here and show you that she was still safe in the land of the living."

The gallant captain cast one meaning glance at his wife, and then bowed to the young lady, saying:

"I am very glad of it. My father was deeply distressed to think that he had been the cause of driving you into the river by threatening to cast you into prison. I assure you if I had been present he would not have offered you the slightest threat or insult."

The old smuggler's daughter only answered by a scornful smile, and she then turned to the old gypsy woman and asked:

"Why have you brought him here?"

Old Mag chuckled merrily to herself ere she replied, saying:

"I brought the gallant captain here to ask him a few questions in your presence and to meet a friend. Will you answer me, sir?"

The question was addressed to Captain Rodney, who answered, haughtily:

"What do you want to know, old woman?"

"I want to know if this young woman is your lawful wife?"

The prisoner cast a peculiar glance at his young wife ere he replied:

"This is not the time or place to answer such questions, and I deny your right, Mag Morrison, to put them to me."

His young wife advanced and grasped his arm in an impulsive manner as she demanded:

"Will you dare deny that I am your wife?"

"This is a vile conspiracy against me, and I will not answer any questions even if you put me to death, as I believe you intend to do."

The old gypsy woman was staring at the prisoner with wicked eyes during the scene, and she now burst forth in thrilling tones, crying:

"His mother was false and base before him, even though she was of my blood, and he is a lying hound and a black traitor. It would serve him right, Maggie Devine, if you slew him with your own hands, but the stars predict that he is to die at sea, and no one will touch him here."

The angry old creature then turned to the foreign young lady, saying:

"Will you believe me, young lady, when I tell you that I saw him wedded to this granddaughter of mine thirteen months ago?"

"I do believe you, kind old woman," readily responded the young lady. "The wretch made love to me and offered to make me his wife on the night when he was shot in the park. He was then base enough to accuse a certain young man of the crime, knowing full well at the time that it was his own lawful wife who had tried to take vengeance on him for his treachery. That was enough for me, and I have despised him since."

A scornful laugh burst from the gallant captain, and he sneered forth:

"Silly girl, I was amusing myself at your expense, and I never dreamt of being disloyal to my own charming wife here, who is far more beautiful than ever you could be."

As the prisoner spoke, he turned to his young

wife with a beaming countenance, and he moved toward her as if intending to embrace her if not hindered by his bound arms, while he continued, saying:

"Dear Maggie, I did but joke when I refused to acknowledge you as my wife, as only that I feared my father's anger, I would have been proud to own you from the very first."

The old gypsy woman took him up on the instant, as he demanded:

"Are you prepared to take her before your father now and acknowledge her as your wife?"

"Certainly I am. I would have done so in the cottage at all risk, only that I am not coward enough to be bullied by you and her brother. If I had a few of my brave lads at my back, then the smuggling rascals would have a different story to tell."

At that moment Captain Racket stepped out from a small apartment and confronted his enemy with flashing eyes, as he demanded:

"Are you prepared to meet the smuggling rascals, man to man?"

"Certainly I am. I sought you out last night, but you gave me the slip in your new craft. Give me the number of the men you have on board, as well as the guns you carry, and I swear to go out to meet you as soon as I can get my cutter under way, promising you at the same time that I will not carry a single man or a gun more than you do."

"Bravely spoken!" cried the old gypsy woman, "and the fellow has plucky blood in his veins for all."

A joyous smile appeared on the face of the smuggler captain as he responded to the challenge, saying:

"I accept your offer, Captain Rodney, but I decline to give you the information you see. Come out to meet me in the cutter with your regular crew and guns, and I will only say that the new Molly Asthore will not fly from you, although I am certain that she is not your equal in men or guns."

"When will we meet, Captain Racket?"

"Tomorrow night, and off the headlands outside here, as the new moon will be up then."

"That is agreed," responded the gallant captain of the cutter.

"Did I not predict that there was red blood on the new moon?" cried the Irish Meg Merrilies, staring upward as if her eyes could penetrate through the rocks above them.

"Never mind about your predictions, Mag," said Captain Racket, "as I only know that I have sworn to avenge the old Molly Asthore and some of her crew, and I have other wrongs to redress beside."

As the old smuggler captain uttered the last words he turned to his daughter and whispered into her ear:

"Fortune baffled us in one means of vengeance, but we are favored in another way. I will grant your request, my dear, and you can come out with me to witness the struggle."

The young lady clasped her father's hand in the most fervent manner as she responded:

"A thousand thanks, dear father, and gladly will I go out with you to witness the combat. Set that wretch free now, and strive to prevail on him to acknowledge the young woman as his wife."

The blunt smuggler took the hint at once, and he turned on Captain Rodney, saying:

"I believe I heard you say that you feared your father's anger were you to tell him that this young lady is your wife?"

The old smuggler captain then advanced and placed his mouth close to the ear of the prisoner as he whispered into it:

"If your father is very angry, just tell him that there is doubt if your mother was ever married at all, and that the truth may soon come to light."

The prisoner started back on hearing the mysterious words, and he glared fiercely at the old smuggler as he asked:

"Who are you old fiend?"

"Never mind who I am, but just you take my advice and give your father the hint I gave you, if he attempts any of his nonsense with you about your marriage. This much I will tell you, however, and that is that I hate your father and yourself, and that I have good reason for so doing, as old Mag Morrison there can vouch for."

The old gypsy woman nodded her head in a significant manner, as she replied:

"It is coming at last, and the dark cloud is over Rodney Hall, while the red blood appears on the new moon. I tell you, Captain Rodney, to follow the captain's advice, and away with you to Rodney Hall with your wife. Tell your father that the hour is at hand when his Irish Meg Merrilies will speak out, and the great secret will be exposed, even though one of my own blood may suffer."

The young wife seized her husband by the arm, at the same time crying:

"Come away with me, Captain Rodney, and whatever befalls you I will cling to you through good or ill."

"On with the bandage again," cried the smuggler captain, "and lead him out into the boat. If he does not acknowledge his good wife, his father will hear about him and his marriage before long."

Bat Moran and the other smugglers then appeared, the gag and the bandages were placed on the prisoner, and he was led out to the boat again. Old Sir Strange Rodney had returned after a fruitless search for the gypsy woman and the smugglers, and he was seated in the library again and muttering to himself:

"What in the mischief has become of my son, if he is not away to the bay to go out in quest of the smuggler again?"

Familiar footsteps were heard in the hall at the moment, and then into the library strode Captain Rodney. One glance up at his son told the old magistrate that the young man was fearfully excited, and he inquired:

"Where have you been, Pierce, and what has happened to you?"

"Was my mother a gypsy woman, sir?"

CHAPTER XII.—A Very Strange Character.

"Who told you that your mother was a gypsy woman?"

"Old Mag Morrison."

"What else did she tell you about the matter?"

"Not very much, but another person intimated something more serious still."

Sir Strange Rodney turned abruptly away and advanced to a private cabinet standing in the corner of the library. Opening a private drawer by means of a secret spring he drew forth a large key and then turned to his son, saying:

"Follow me."

The old magistrate led the way through the main hall of the great building and then turned toward one of the wings at the rear, which had been falling into decay for some time. On arriving at a large oaken door Sir Strange applied the key to the lock while he said to his son:

"Follow me as silently as possible and do not utter a word."

After proceeding up several flights of stairs which were covered with dust, the old magistrate stole toward a small window in the passage from which he could peer into a large apartment. Motioning to his son to keep back, Sir Strange Rodney peered into the apartment for some time, while he said to himself:

"Hang all the meddlers who have forced this exposure on me! If Pierce has my spirit we will defy them all. If he has not, he will be a beggar, and strangers will own Rodney Hall when I am gone."

After gazing in for some time the old man withdrew from the window, and motioned to his amazed son to advance and look in. The young man did advance to peer in, and an exclamation of astonishment would have escaped from him if his father had not placed his hand on his mouth, while he whispered into his ear:

"Hush, on your life! Look well at what you see, note the person inside and the surroundings, and then return with me as quietly as you came."

"Did you notice the lady well?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, that is your mother."

"Impossible, sir. My mother has been dead for several years."

"Pierce Rodney, that is your mother. Are you now prepared to hear her history?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Did you notice that she appeared to be a very aged woman?"

"I did, sir. She appeared to be old enough to be my grandmother."

"Yes, she does, but she was not eighteen when you were born, and her hair is now as white as the driven snow."

"Why does she dress in such youthful and extravagant manner, sir? But I suppose it is best that you should tell me about her in your own way."

"I will do it, Pierce. Yes, your mother was a gypsy and she was one of the most beautiful creatures I ever beheld when I first met her. She won my heart in a short time and I married her."

"Then I was born in wedlock?"

"You were and you were not. I will tell you her story as briefly as possible. After I married your mother I was a little ashamed of her gypsy connections and I took her away with me to live on the continent. When you were born we returned here to my estate, and my wife totally ignored the gypsies in the neighborhood."

"Was she related to Mag Morrison, sir?" interrupted the young man.

"She was, and very nearly related at that. Things went on very well until about two years after you were born, when my wife suddenly disappeared, taking you with her. Some years went by, and I went to travel on the continent again. While in Spain I met a charming young lady of that country, and she soon became my bride. I brought my new wife here to Ireland, and we lived very happily together for about three years, a son and a daughter being born to us.

"We were all very happy, indeed, when a storm-cloud burst upon us, and you may imagine how it came."

"As I was walking in the park one evening, your mother appeared to me, looking as beautiful as ever, and I at first took her for a ghost. She told me a very plausible story about her disappearance, and I believed her. She explained that she had been summoned to a secret meeting of the tribe in London, and that she was bound to obey under penalty of death to her son and herself."

"What became of the Spanish lady and her two children, sir?" asked the young man. "I remember them very well and the row there was at the time."

"Yes, yes, there was a fearful row, and my half-brother took her part. The Spanish lady and her two children left Ireland to return to Spain, but they were lost at sea."

"They were not lost at sea!" cried a well-known voice, as the Irish Meg Merriles flung open the window and appeared before them.

"Where are they?" asked the old man.

"They are here in Ireland."

The old woman leaned on her staff and bent her eyes on the old man and said:

"Had you better not conclude your story about his mother before I reveal my mystery?"

Sir Strange Rodney groaned in despair and then grumbled forth:

"Then tell it to him and be hanged to you!"

Turning her eyes on the young man, old Mag addressed him, saying:

"Your mother fled with another man, and that man was a gypsy. Would you like to know who he was?"

"Yes, let me hear the truth," answered the excited young sailor.

"It was her lawful husband before she ever met your father here, and it was with him she fled when she first left Rodney Hall after you were born."

The young man turned on his father and demanded:

"Is that true, sir?"

The old man only answered by a groan, while the gypsy woman pointed upward as she said:

"Go ask that gay creature upstairs, who still flaunts in her silks and satins, where your father found her after she ran away from him the second time, and when he gave out that she was dead."

"Where did he find her?" asked the young sailor.

"He found her in a gypsy camp in Scotland, living with her first husband, and she became a maniac when he dragged her away from him. Ever since then she has lived up in that room where you saw her tonight and where she wears

all the finery of her youthful days, though she now appears like a withered old hag."

The young man cast an appealing glance at his father as he asked:

"Is that true, sir?"

The old man's only reply was a groan, and he then sprang up from his chair and confronted the gypsy woman as he demanded, in passionate tones:

"What brought you here again?"

"To set the wrong right at last, Sir Strange."

"In what way?"

"By placing your lawful children where they should be, and by letting this fellow look for himself."

"Are you certain that my children are here in Ireland now, Mag Morrison?"

"I am; and you saw them recently."

"I saw them?"

"Yes, you saw them. Your daughter was your guest in this very house and your son was the youth who was shot in the cavern that night."

"Is it possible that Henrietta Gascon is my half-sister?"

"As sure as you both stand there, the beautiful young lady is your daughter, Sir Strange Rodney, and you know that she is your heiress also."

"Why did she come here?"

"She came here to avenge the wrongs of her mother and to reclaim her birthright. Her brother followed her in Captain Racket's smuggling craft, and he is also prepared to fight the good fight with her."

"Who sent them here?"

"Their second father."

"What do you mean by their second father?"

"I mean the man who had been a second father to them, who rescued them at sea when they were cast on the waves, who reared them in luxury ever since, and who loves them as if they were his own children."

"Who is this man?" demanded Pierce Rodney, with a fierce scowl.

"You know him as Captain Racket."

The old man only groaned aloud, while old Mag smiled as she answered:

"You'll have to fight to the death. You are already engaged to meet Captain Racket in a deadly struggle at sea, and he is prepared to prove that his adopted children are the legal heirs to this estate."

"And if Captain Racket should happen to conquer me, what then?" asked the young sailor with a very confident smile.

"If Captain Racket conquers you and you survive you must pledge your oath to leave Ireland forever, and never set claim to the Rodney title and estate again, and I can prove that you have no right to them at all."

Old Mag drew a document from her pocket, unfolded it, and placed it on the table before the young sailor, saying, in curt tones:

"Read that, and see if it suits you."

The young sailor hastened to read the document, and when he had finished it seized a pen, saying:

"I will sign it."

He then hastened to put his signature to the bottom of the document. Then the old woman clapped her hands, and the window was flung open. Then into the apartment strode the

smuggler captain, and he advanced to the table, saying:

"I am here to sign the document, and so are my adopted children."

Then through the window appeared the young lady known as Henrietta Gascon, and the youth called Henry.

The old man stared up at them for a moment, and made an effort as if he would move from his chair to embrace them, when he fell helpless on the floor as he gasped forth:

"My children!"

CHAPTER XIII.—The Struggle at Sea.

Captain Rodney was so surprised at the appearance of the young lady that he did not notice the total prostration of his father. The old gypsy woman sprang forward, however, and lifted the old man in her powerful arms to place him on a sofa. The smuggler then seized the pen and wrote his own name under that of the captain of the revenue cutter. Handing the pen to the young lady, he said:

"Sign my daughter."

The young lady did sign her name in a clear hand. Then the smuggler and his daughter left the room. The old gypsy woman turned and gave orders to the servants for restoring their master, and she concluded by saying to them:

"He is in a death-swoon from which he may never recover, but if you obey me to the letter the chances are in his favor. Hasten, hasten, as I have no time to waste now, even for the master of Rodney Hall."

Mag Morrison then hastened away from the hall, and fleet were her movements as she bounded along toward the river after the smugglers, muttering:

"This night will settle all, and the rightful heirs must have their own again."

Down by the Shannon side the smugglers were putting off in their boats when Mag Morrison appeared on the scene, saying:

"I must out with you, Captain Racket, to witness the brave fight."

As the old gypsy spoke she stepped lightly into the boat, which contained the beautiful young lady and her brother, Bat Moran and the smuggler captain. The boats pushed off together, shooting across the mouth of the river until they reached a small bay on the coast, where the smuggler found his splendid craft all ready to put to sea. When the smuggler was fairly out to sea the moon was shining in full, and it was almost as bright as day on the water and along the coast.

At that moment the revenue cutter was espied coming out of the bay about four miles along the coast, and the smuggling craft bore down toward her in fighting trim. When the two vessels were within gunshot, the revenue cutter opened fire with her long bow piece, but the smuggler kept on her way uninjured, while her captain cried to his men in cheering tones:

"Don't fire until you are sure of doing damage and until I give the word."

Soon a loud report rang out from the smuggling vessel at the moment, and the young lady gasped for breath ere she said:

"Our side has commenced now, and I pray that it will end in victory."

Eager as the men of the revenue cutter were to pounce on their foes and engage them with the cold steel, the active smugglers were the first to gain a point, by boarding their enemy's vessel. Captain Racket was the first to gain the deck of the revenue cutter, and soon after at each side of him were the lad Henry and Bat Moran.

"Down with the revenue hounds!" cried Captain Racket, "and remember the old Molly Asthore."

The struggle went on for some time, several brave fellows falling on each side, when at length the two leaders found themselves face to face and they recognized each other by the clear light of the moon. And then only did Captain Rodney lose his temper. Uttering a fierce imprecation he made a cut at his foe as he cried:

"Death to you, pirate dog!"

Captain Racket laughed scornfully as he warded off the blow, and another sweep of his arm brought the young captain to his knees with his sword arm disabled. Disdaining to strike his helpless foe, Captain Racket flung him aside on the deck and hastened to follow up the advantage his men had gained by pressing on the wavering revenue men, as he cried:

"One more dash at them, my hearties, and we will clear the deck. Their captain is down and beaten and his vessel is ours. Spare all who surrender."

In less than five minutes after all the survivors on board the cutter were secured, and the smugglers were attending to their wounded friends and foes. The devoted gypsy wife kept close to her husband, using her cutlass to defend him as best she could, until she received a blow on the side of the head that laid her senseless on the deck.

Before Captain Rodney could make any reply, Mag Morrison strode into the cabin, followed by the young lady and her brother. Casting one scowl at the wounded officer, the gypsy cried:

"He must keep the compact, or I will denounce him as a vile criminal."

The old gypsy woman then strode over and bent her head to the wounded man's ear, as she whispered to him:

"Where is Mary Luby?"

The wounded man sprang from the sofa, uttering a yell of astonishment, and he then turned and glared at the old gypsy woman, as he gasped forth:

"You are an infernal witch!"

He then turned and darted out of the cabin with his eyes glaring like a madman, as he cried:

"I will never die on the gallows!"

Then over the side of the vessel he plunged, shouting:

"Do your worst now, you infernal old hag," and he sank out of sight. It was just three years later after the death of Captain Pierce Rodney, and his father was seated in the large drawing-room at Rodney Hall. It was evening, and he was looking wistfully down the avenue as he muttered to himself:

"Will they never come?"

A tall withered figure glided into the apartment at the moment, and then a hoarse voice addressed the old man, saying:

"Have patience, Sir Strange, as they will not fail to be here with you soon."

A faint smile appeared on the face of the old man as he turned to the old gypsy woman, saying:

"Why, my Meg Merrilies, I did not know that you had arrived, but you are welcome. Your prophecies have always come true, and I now believe that they will come at the appointed hour."

Even as the old man spoke the rattle of carriage-wheels could be heard on the gravel path leading up to the hall, and he attempted to rise from his chair, as he exclaimed:

"Here they come!"

The drawing-room door was flung open the next moment and into the room walked a tall old man with a full white beard, and on his arm was a beautiful young woman. Following after them were two young gentlemen, wearing full beards, but after the fashion adopted by the Americans of that time. The young woman at once sprang forward and embraced Sir Strange Rodney, crying:

"I am with you at last, father."

The old man pressed her to his breast as he sobbed forth:

"This is more than I expected. Do you all forgive me, Ralph?"

"We would not be here if we did not, brother," replied the former smuggler of the Shannon. "And now let me present you to your daughter's husband, Captain Moran of the American navy."

While Sir Strange was embracing his son-in-law, his Irish Meg Merrilies turned aside with tears in her eyes as she muttered:

"All is well now, and the dark shadow has passed over Rodney Hall. The wicked woman who made all this mischief is cold in her grave, the rightful heirs will enjoy their own, and old Mag Morrison will end her days in the green woods of Rodney."

When Bat Moran could get away from his father-in-law, he turned and clasped the hand of the old gypsy woman, saying:

"You are hale and hearty yet, good Mag, and long may you keep so. How is Maggie Devine?"

"She is well and happy, and she still lives in the old cottage with your mother. And oh, won't that mother be glad to see you this evening, and won't she be proud of you?"

"We will be all happy this evening, Mag," replied the young man, "and I trust that none of the neighbors will recognize me as one of the old smugglers of the Shannon."

Next week's issue will contain "A HAUNTED BOY: or, THE MADHOUSE MYSTERY."

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AL, THE ATHLETE, OR, THE CHAMPION OF THE CLUB

By R. T. BENNETT

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER VIII.—Exposing a Rascal.

Next day there was a meeting of the Midwoods at the gym, and as all fifteen of the members were present it was decided to use some of the money they won at the ball game to buy some necessary apparatus and fireworks.

A committee was appointed for this purpose, and when the club met in the old building that night the things were bought and in place.

There was a new trapeze, a pair of flying-rings, a horizontal-bar, ladders, poles, boxing-gloves, fencing-foils, and, in fact, half a dozen other adjuncts to a well-equipped gymnasium.

The relatives of most of the boys had come down to see their new apparatus and the fireworks display, and as all the lamps had been lighted, the place looked bright, neat and as interesting as a more pretentious gym might.

Seeing the Harlow family come in, Al joined them, and said:

"I'm glad to see you here, Mr. Harlow."

Mr. Harlow told him he wished to have Bud join the Midwoods, and said that Jenny had even gone so far as to provide him with a uniform.

"Good!" exclaimed Al. "We will take him in hand at once."

The boys went into executive session, Bud was nominated and elected, and having been taken into the locker-room, he put on his little uniform of white with its big blue M on the bosom of the shirt.

Seeing that there was to be a big audience, Al wishing to show off his boys, formed them in squads, and put them through a calisthenic drill.

"By Jove, you have got those boys well drilled!" exclaimed the old banker in surprise, "and I must say that if you do as well with my son as you have with the rest I shall be more than pleased, Al Adams!"

A flush of pardonable pride mantled the boy's cheeks, for it was very pleasant to know that his efforts were appreciated.

"If you wait here a while," said he, "you will see some better work than that in a few minutes, Mr. Harlow!"

As Al finished speaking the door of the gym opened, and William Drew and his son Jim walked in, and paused near the old banker's party.

They evidently had no suspicion that the banker was there, for the moment Drew's eyes rested upon Harlow he gave a slight start, his face turned pale, and he recoiled, as if he were about to retreat.

The banker gave a gasp, and an angry gleam shot from his eyes.

He suddenly strode between the mill-owner and the door, and fixing a deadly look upon his enemy, he exclaimed sternly:

"Stop where you are! You are just the person I wish to see!"

"What do you want of me, George Harlow?" growled Drew, savagely.

The banker seized Bud by the arm, pulled him in front of the man, and pointed at the little fellow.

The mill-owner uttered a startled cry, glared at the little fellow, and began to tremble in the most agitated manner.

Mr. Harlow had a cold, deadly look in his eyes as he said:

"I'll tell you what I want of you, sir! Ten years ago my son was stolen from me at the instigation of a cowardly cur who craved vengeance for a thrashing I gave him. The scoundrel who had my son abducted was—you!"

"What!" yelled the mill-owner, recoiling.

"You! You!" shouted the old banker, pointing an accusing finger at the man. "I'll prove it! You put this child in the care of your wife, who resides in New York. She reared him."

"You are crazy!"

"Am I?" exclaimed the old banker. "We will see about that! I have sent a detective to New York to arrest your wife, and as soon as she is in custody we intend to secure her confession of your guilt, and put you under arrest too. You shall have to answer for your villainy in a court of justice, William Drew!"

The mill-owner looked as if he were going to faint.

It was with the greatest difficulty that he managed to keep his wits about him, as he had been badly shocked.

But the man was desperate, and realizing that his salvation depended upon his coolness, he pulled his courage together, and retorted:

"You are trying to disgrace me before all these people, but I shall make you retract every lying word you have uttered."

And with this bluff the disreputable father and son rushed out of the gymnasium, and hurried away.

A deathly silence prevailed in the place after they had gone, but it was suddenly broken by an excited crowd of people, who wanted to get all the particulars of this remarkable scene.

In a few words the banker posted them, and loud words of anger and threats were made against the Drews, as every one disliked them most cordially for their many meannesses.

This exciting scene broke up the meeting of the Midwood Club, and every one departed, discussing Drew's rascality.

In the meantime the mill-owner and his son rushed to the nearest telegraph office, and there a message was sent off at once.

It was directed to Mrs. Drew, and ordered her to take a train that night for Midwood without fail, as she was in grave danger.

This done, the Drews hastened away, and when they were out of the hearing of every one the mill-owner paused, and glaring at his son, he gasped in hoarse, trembling tones:

"Jim, how did that brat manage to get away from your mother, and find his way back here to Midwood?"

"That's more than I can guess, dad," answered Jim in puzzled tones.

"And above all, how did the boy find out his

identity, and go to Harlow? Could your mother have given me away."

"I doubt it."

"She must have turned traitor on me, because only we three knew anything about that boy. As neither you nor I would be such fools as to deliberately incriminate ourselves, she must be guilty!"

"Better not condemn her unheard, pop."

"Well, when we meet, the truth will come out!"

"Your telegram must have reached her before the officer sent by Harlow, so you have foiled his little game very nicely, sir."

"I hope so. But the boy can convict me, and I must take steps to put him where he can do me no damage. And it must be done at once."

"What can you do?"

"I have not decided yet."

"You will have to get possession of the boy again. Your safety depends upon it. With the evidence he could give against you in court, your conviction of kidnaping will be sure to follow!"

"That's just what worries me, Jim!"

"Can't you steal the boy again?"

"It will have to be done. At the time I had him abducted, ten years ago, to get square with Harlow, your mother and I quarreled, and separated. She did not know who the child was at the time, and I agreed to support her well under condition that she would take care of the young one. It seems rather doubtful that she knows his history. But it is very queer that the boy should get back to his parents after all this time!"

While speaking they had paused in a lonely part of the road, beside a dense clump of bushes.

At this moment the bushes parted, and a burly, shadowy figure glided into view, and the guilty pair started back with cries of alarm.

"An eavesdropper!" gasped the mill-owner in dismay.

A low chuckle escaped the newcomer, and he answered hoarsely:

"Heard every word ye said, William Drew!"

"Heavens! Who is that?"

The man lit a match.

Its tiny flame showed them a ragged tramp.

He held the light up to his bloated face and leered at Drew.

"Don't yer reckernize me?" he sneered.

"Scotty!" almost yelled the mill-owner, recoiling.

"Right yer are, me covey," answered the outcast. "I'm the same old bum yer hired ten years ago ter steal ther kid yer wuz a-talkin' about!"

"What brings you here?"

"I'll tell yer. It wuz me as took ther boy away from yer wife a short time ago. I wuz a-bringin' him here, so's I could make yer give me some money. If yer refused I wuz a-goin' ter give yer away ter Harlow!"

"Blackmail, eh?"

"Call it what yer like; it was my only way ter bleed yer, I am very hard up, an' I've got ter have some stamps—d'yer see?"

"Then your beautiful design to beat me was defeated?" sneered Drew.

"Yes, for the present. But I ain't despairin', old feller!"

"See here, Scotty," said the rich man, earnestly, as he pulled a wad of bank notes out of his pocket.

and handed the tramp a bill. "Here is a twenty-dollar note. You are just the man I need."

The hobo grasped the bill, and grinned as he put it in his pocket.

"I thought so!" he commented. "Got work fer me, hain't yer?"

"Yes! I want you to steal that boy away from Harlow for me, and take him down to the old lime quarry. You know where it is?"

"Yes, boss, I know."

"When the job is done you will get five hundred dollars!"

"It's a bargain!" declared the wretch, with a look of joy stealing over his ugly face. "I'm glad you an' me is a-doin' business agin."

"Be very careful not to get caught, and notify me when you have him," a few instructions, and Scotty hurried away while the now relieved mill-owner went home with his son.

"You boys are doing splendidly, and I am very well satisfied with your performances," said Al to the Midwoods several days later as they finished up their practice stunts in the gym.

"Then you think we will have some sort of a show against the Mercury teams when we meet them day after to-morrow?" asked Nick.

"If they beat us it will be a very close margin," responded Al, "for the only game in which our boys show any weakness is in the running broad jump. They will have to keep on practicing up to the last moment. You hear what I say, don't you, Marsh and Turner?"

The two boys spoken to nodded.

"How about the one-mile run?" queried Rich.

"Can you and Burt improve on your work?"

"We'll try," said Rich. "But I've got the record of the Mercurys, and neither of their men can touch our mark."

"Don't trust to their past performances," warned Adams. "They may have vastly improved. Say, Nelson, you had better keep Winters tuned up for his hop-step-and-jump, for one of the easiest things in the world is to go stale."

"Don't you fret about me, Al," said Winters. "I know what a stiff game we are going up against, and we don't intend to let them beat us!"

Just then Bud came jogging up to the gym, with a glow on his usually pallid cheeks, and pausing in front of Al, he said:

"Just finished my quarter-mile run. I wish you'd let me take a half-mile, Al."

"No, not yet!" negatived the young athlete. "You must keep at the quarter for the rest of the week, at least. Perhaps I'll give you the additional quarter next Monday."

"All right," sighed Bud. "I am ambitious, though."

Jenny came in at that moment, a smile on her pretty face for all the bowing boys, and casting an approving glance at her brother, she cried:

"Oh, my, Bud, you look like another boy!"

"Nothing like athletic training to improve a weak youngster like him," laughed Al. "Have your parents noticed the improvement?"

"Yes, indeed!" she answered, "and they are delighted with the speed with which Bud is gaining health and strength!"

"Have you heard how the police made out at capturing Mrs. Drew?"

(To be continued)

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MAY 18, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

JAYWALKERS LOSE RIGHTS IN PARIS

Jaywalkers have lost their rights in Paris. The public prosecutor, in a recent case, argued that pedestrians are part of the traffic. The case went up through the lower Courts with the decision changing back and forth, but the highest Court has ruled against the pedestrian and imposed a fine of one franc (about four cents).

THREE-WHEELED CARS ARE TRIED IN RACE

Automobiles built bicycle-fashion, with only three wheels, have been used in Germany for taxicab and private service and have recently appeared in racing circles. A car of this type recently won a six-day motor trial event in Scotland.

SOME REASONS WHY TIRES WEAR OUT

Tires on the right wheels of a car wear faster than those on the left wheels because the car is driven at the right side of the road, where the right side tires come into contact with ruts, debris and the curbing of the road. Another reason is that because of the camber, or the slope of the road toward the gutter, the right tires bear most of the car's weight. Constant grinding and sliding in the loose debris cause more wear on the tires which pass through it. The left-hand tires are almost always near the center, the part of the road most traveled.

KEEP A CASUAL WATCH FOR LEAKS

At this season of the year it is well to stop small leaks in the cooling system the moment they appear. A slow leak in the radiator, which may have been developed since it was last filled, may cause serious inconvenience and great harm during freezing weather. Keep a casual watch for all leaks, not only in the radiator, but in the hose connections and the water pump packing glands. Every time the hood is lifted, note whether the hose connections and the glands are tight. As a rule, hose connection leaks can be stopped by tightening the hose clamps, and gland leaks may be remedied by turning up the gland nuts, unless the packing is worn out and must be replaced.

RADIO WILL RUSH NEWS OF MOON ECLIPSE FROM CANADA

Radio will be employed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to send observations of the eclipse of the moon to be taken for Harvard University in the early morning of June 15 at Baker Lake, in the Northwest Territory. This lake in the Far North lies 150 miles west of the post of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at Chesterfield Inlet, Hudson's Bay. Director R. Meldrum Stewart of the Dominion Observatory at Ottawa has received a communication from Harvard astronomers asking if it would be possible to obtain these observations.

It would be an arduous journey for the "mounties," but officials are inclined to think they would make it in the interest of science if word could be sent to the post at Chesterfield Inlet. The only means would be by radio, and it is expected the university will obtain the co-operation of one of the large broadcasting stations to send the message, which would be received both at the Inlet and at Fort Norman.

LAUGHS

HOW ABOUT HOSE?

She was just a gardener's daughter, but she knew all the rakes.

—Denison Flamingo.

Jim: Why don't you go home?

Will: My wife's mad at me and locked me out.

Jim: What's she mad about?

Will: Because I don't come home.

—Goblin.

SHOCKING

What if she was only an electrician's daughter—she sure was a live wire!

Cincinnati Cynic

WHY, HENRY W.!

"How do you know *Evangeline* was the first wicked poem in America?"

"Why, doesn't Longfellow say, 'This is the forest prime evil?'"

—Illinois Siren.

NEVER MIND ME

Freddy returned to his Iowa home from college during a wet spell. As he paraded the village sidewalks he noticed a hat lying in the mud of the street. He picked it up, found a man's head beneath it and endeavored to help him out.

The mired one spoke: "Never mind me. I'm on horseback."

—Ames Green Gander.

HELP!

Bricker (trying to redeem himself): Well, at least she could dance, couldn't she?

Bricked: Dance? Say—it was like helping an old lady across Fifth avenue in the middle of the block.

—Annapolis Log.

IN A CAFE

Clarice: Look at that striking young waiter.

Babette: *Tres chic, n'est-ce pas?*

Clarice: Tray sheik is right.

—Stanford Chaparral.

Tom And His Camera

Tom Gale was the happiest boy in Brooklyn on the morning of June 5th, when his father handed him a pretty little amateur photograph camera as a birthday present, for the boy was sixteen years old that day.

It was just what Tom had been wishing for during the past several months, for the boys in his street all had either bicycles, ponies, tennis outfits, footballs, and other things with which to amuse themselves when they came home from school, and he had nothing of the kind.

There was a little pamphlet to the camera box which explained how to take portraits and landscape views, which Tom studied very carefully and after a few days' practice, he mastered the art of making pictures, and turned out some very fair work.

Now throughout all his experiences, it never once occurred to Tom that it was necessary to have a permit to use his camera in Prospect Park until an incident occurred that brought it to his mind.

He just planted his tripod one sunny afternoon, in the vicinity of the Parade ground, to take a snap-shot at a corner of the lake, in which some swans were swimming along, when out of the bushes came a policeman.

"See here, young feller," said he, approaching the startled boy, "have you got a license to take pictures in this park?"

"No," replied Tom, with a start and a changing of color, as his fingers involuntarily closed over the tripod of his camera.

"I thought not," said the officer, in satisfied tones. "I'll have to arrest—"

But before he had fairly begun speaking Tom snatched up his camera and away he ran like a streak, with horrible visions of prison straining him in the face to lend speed to his legs.

The policeman was very fat, and of course could not run so swiftly as Tom, thereby giving the boy a great advantage.

He soon left the panting and puffing officer far in the rear, and dodging in toward the lake as he saw another policeman ahead, he glided toward an open rustle summerhouse on the water's edge.

It looked like a good place to hide until the two policemen went away, but as he drew near it he saw two men inside who were standing with their backs turned toward him, earnestly talking.

Both were dressed plainly, and one was older than the other.

The youngest had a smooth face and was about thirty years old, while the other was evidently ten years older, and although he wore no mustache or beard, he had side whiskers as dark as his hair.

The hidden boy would not have paid much attention to the two men had it not been for the singular fact that one was blind in the right eye. The loss of his optic being remedied by wearing a staring glass eye.

As the boy noticed this deformity he also saw that the two men were very angry at each other, and as their voices arose to a pitch of fury he heard the elder man exclaim:

"Jasper Stafford, although you are my step-brother, you must pay your gambling debt to me

as if I were a stranger. I hold your note for five hundred dollars which you lost to me in Murphy's poker room, and as I am hard pressed for funds I want you to pay up. Refuse, and I swear that I will take the note to your father, expose your depravity, and swear to sue you for the amount."

"Roger Priestly," cried the young man, hoarsely, as he sprang up with pale cheeks and flashing eyes, "would you be guilty of such accursed meanness as that? Would you disgrace me forever, knowing as you know how my father detests all vices and believes I am an exemplary young man, studying, as I am, for the ministry?"

"I am desperate," replied Priestly, in unmoved tones. "I must have money. I shall not hesitate over the means I take to get it."

"But I tell you again I have not got it, and I implore you to wait until I can borrow it from father," said Stafford. "He is a rich man, but I have recently borrowed so much he may question me, and I cannot lie. Have mercy, I beseech you, Roger, and do not forget that I never did a wrong act in my life until you brought me to that gambling house and induced me to play for money, when the fatal fascination for cards overwhelmed me."

It was only a chapter of an incident that was to affect Tom Gale's life, and when the two men vanished, he left his overcoat, and went over the fence of the park, making his escape without the policeman seeing him, and then hurried home.

One of his neighbors owned a cat-boat which was kept in Jamaica Bay, and when Saturday afternoon came. Tom went down to the shore, to take a sail with his friend.

There were some pretty views to be secured there, the boy assured him, so Tom carried his camera along, with his lunch and fishing tackle, assured of having a fine day's sport.

Unfortunately, though, the prospect of taking pictures became a matter of doubt, as the sky was threatening all the afternoon.

While Tom's friend went out on the cat-boat in a skiff to shake out the furl of the sail and get up the anchor, Tom strolled off with his camera to get a water view, before the sky became any darker, and thus would spoil all possibility of any picture after all.

He saw a float moored amid the reeds, at an isolated spot opposite the old steamboat channel that ran from Canarsie, and planted his tripod in the reeds, in back of it.

From there he had a magnificent view of the bay, down so far as Rockaway bar, and the foreground of the picture taking in the old abandoned float, would break the monotony of the water scene, and lend attractiveness to the picture.

Having gained a good focus, he swung open the ground glass, slipped his plate-holder in the notches, and drew out the slide.

He then grasped the cap, pulled it off the lens, and counted.

The gloomy weather necessitated a longer exposure than usual, and when he had timed it correctly by his watch he capped the lens again, shoved in the slide over the plate, and was just in the act of taking out the holder, when he heard a loud noise.

Glancing up hastily, he saw the crouching figure of a man go rushing through the tall reeds and

disappear behind an old boat-house a short distance away.

Tom was mystified over the man's strange actions.

Then he swept a keen glance around and observed something which he had not noticed before. It was the drenched body of a man lying upon the float.

With his curiosity aroused over the matter Tom made his way toward the float, when upon coming to the trail made by the man who ran away through the tall grass, he saw a gold watch and chain lying in the mud and picked them up.

Considering himself lucky over the find, he continued on to the float, and reaching the prostrate man he bent over him, peered in his face, and then started up with a terrified cry.

"The man is dead!" was Tom's frantic ejaculation.

The body was drenched—as if it had just come out of the water, and the boy made the startling discovery that the man was the youngest of the two—Jasper Stafford—whom he had heard quarreling with Roger Priestly in the Prospect Park rustic house!

It occupied several moments for Tom to recover from the shock, and he was just about to hurry away from the spot, when he heard a footstep behind him, and turning around, he beheld a man.

He looked like a plain citizen, but it happened that he was a detective, and he said, apologetically:

"Was just passing, saw this fellow, and came to see what the trouble was? Fall overboard? Friend of yours? What are you doing with that handsome watch in your hand?"

Before Tom could reply the man peered at the recumbent form quite sharply, and then burst out with:

"Jerusalem! The man is dead! There are ugly finger marks on his throat, as if he'd been strangled. Then, he's been immersed, too. Lord, and see, his watch-chain has been ripped out of his vest button hole! See here, sonny, is that your watch?"

"No!" trembling replied Tom, turning pale in the face.

"How did this happen?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you, sir."

"Humph! Very likely. This is a murder. You are my prisoner."

Poor Tom was marched off to the prison cell.

That afternoon the detective, who caused his arrest, called upon him, and closely questioned him, when Tom explained how it happened that he came to be near the float, how he saw the man stealing away, how he found the watch, and how he then not only discovered the dead man, but saw that he was a person whom he had met before, under peculiar circumstances.

A few more questions passed, and then he went away without saying a word, and hunted up Roger Priestly.

He found that gentleman at home, in a fashionable house on a stylish street, and being ushered into the parlor, he asked him:

"Where were you on Saturday afternoon?"

"In New York," promptly replied Priestly.

"Can you prove it?"

Priestly looked startled, and questioned the detective, whereupon the man told him that Stafford was murdered, and that suspicion rested upon him (Priestly).

With many expressions of grief, horror and amazement the man brought the detective to New York, and proved by a friend that he had been in his company all day Saturday.

On the following night he shadowed Priestly to a noted gambling den in New York and saw him enter the proprietor's private office.

It opened on the hall, and the detective listened outside the door.

"I have come to pay you the five hundred I owe you," he heard Priestly say. "Here is a note signed by my brother covering the amount."

"But now he is dead, who will pay it?"

"My step-father—it is drawn against him. Just state that it was a gambling debt, and to hush up the disgrace on his dead son's name he won't hesitate long about paying up."

The detective began to imagine that Tom Gale was an innocent boy, and that Priestly knew more about Stafford's death than he would confess.

With this, impression on his mind, and a new idea with it, he returned to Tom's prison with the boy's camera, and said:

"See here, wasn't you photographing the spot where the crime was committed a moment before you saw Stafford lying on the float?"

"Yes, I took a picture," asserted Tom, anxiously.

"And the negative is yet in the plate holder?"

"Certainly, sir, unless some one took it out."

"No one touched it. Now can you develop the plate?"

"Very easily."

"Do so."

Tom enumerated all the things he needed, and within half an hour the detective came back with them, and was locked in the cell with the boy.

It was darkened, a ruby light was lit, and then Tom took the plate out of the holder and keenly watched by the lynx-eyed detective, in the deep gloom of the cell, he developed the plate.

The scene on the plate showed a lowering sky over the placid waters of the bay, while kneeling on the float was Roger Priestly, dripping wet, pulling the body of Jasper Stafford out of the water!

The detective took the things out of Tom's cell, and with the precious plate in his hands he hurried away.

That night he met Priestly in his house again, and snapping a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, the detective exclaimed:

"I arrest you for the murder of your step-brother, Priestly!"

"Eh? What!" gasped the startled man, turning deathly pale.

"Look at this evidence of your guilt!" said the officer.

He held the negative up to the light.

But one glance Priestly cast upon it, and with a moan he fainted.

When he recovered consciousness he was in prison. Then he weakened and confessed all to the detective.

Thus it was that Priestly paid the penalty for his crime and Tom was released.

PLUCK AND LUCK

CURRENT NEWS

HORSES TO CARRY KITCHENS

Kitchenettes that can be carried on horseback have been adopted by the War Department for serving hot food to calvarymen afield. Weighing only 200 pounds, they can be folded and packed in thirty seconds. One kitchenette serves a full war-strength troop.

FALLS 200 FEET ON SOFT SNOW

Tossed from a swinging aerial tramway bucket, Glen Higley, thirty-eight, a miner, fell 200 feet to a snowbank and will live, hospital attaches in Bingham, Utah, say. Higley was going from a mine to the reducing plant of the Utah-Delaware mine when the bucket began swaying and pitched him out head foremost.

COMIC STRIP CAUSES PROTESTS IN CHINA

Action of a leading Peking English language newspaper in introducing an American "comic strip" has caused a flood of letters pro and con.

Most of the "tnti" letters voice the view that Peking has been one of the few real intellectual centers left in the world. One despairing reader remarks dolefully, "I had thought I was living in a civilized community."

IN FRANCE EVERYTHING HONKS BUT AUTO

The honk of an automobile horn in Marseilles, France, warns against anything but an automobile.

Virtually all the motor cars have the modern type of mechanical noise producers, while the old-fashioned hand-worked horns now are used on bicycles, horse-drawn carriages, street cars and motor boats.

ELECTRIC SHOCK FOR AUTO THIEF URGED

In the matter of locks and other safety devices numerous "bright ideas" have been brought out. Some have suggested that it would be advisable to remove the steering wheel before an owner leaves his car for any length of time. Electrification of the driver's seat to shock the thief away from his evil intention is another. Still another suggestion from one of a mechanical turn of mind was to place a bell in the car in such a manner that it would sound an alarm when a visitor other than the owner's friend sat in the driver's seat.

MANY BRITISH FIRMS ACQUIRE QUEER NAMES

More unusual and curious names for companies were registered in England during the past year previously, according to registration statistics made public here recently.

The most curious name registered in 1926 was "Dog Baths and Requisites, Ltd." This company was formed to conduct hairdressing saloons, baths and toilet rooms for dogs of the ultra-rich. Other names included, "Uncles, Ltd.," "King Soal, Ltd.," "Virtuous Lady Mining Co.," "Mrs. Brown's Little Tea Shop Lunches Too, Ltd.," and "Little Mary, Ltd."

BABY SAILS SEAS FOR A NEW HOME

Some day when Margaret Ann is big enough for questions, and asks her mother: "Where did you get me?" the mother, who as yet has not seen Margaret Ann, will tell her:

"You came on a shining white ship, sailing, sailing across the shining blue water."

And that will be the truth, for Baby Margaret Ann, seven weeks old, caring not about such things, as parentage, real, accidental, or by choice — was delivered to the nurse aboard the trans-Pacific liner President Madison, and "consigned" to Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Cameron, Shanghai, for adoption.

PEDESTRIANS WARNED OF CROSSING DANGER

Pedestrians shouldn't walk behind cars that have stopped at street intersections to await the change in signals. Many motorists halt their cars directly in the path of people wanting to cross the street. Some folk then start to pass behind them. In the meantime, motor vehicle operators, seeing their machines are blocking the path, start to back up a few feet, endangering persons who are walking behind the cars. This occurs every hour in the day, believes the National Safety Council, which sounds the warning and urges auto drivers to try to stop ere reaching the intersection.

MOTOR COACHES TO REPLACE TROLLEYS ALONG SOUND IF COMMISSION APPROVES

Abandonment of trolleys and installation of motor coaches throughout Southern Connecticut and the Upper Sound-part of Westchester County, N. Y., is sought in petitions which the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad and the Connecticut company are preparing to file with the Public Utility Commission in Hartford.

Everett S. Miller, President of the New York and Stamford Railway, who disclosed that the petitions were to be filed, described the action as "the direct result of negotiations initiated nearly a year ago by the Traffic Committee of the Greenwich Chamber of Commerce through Harry L. Nado, Secretary of the chamber.

"The New York and Stamford uses an interstate trolley system, which in part of its territory leases and operates lines owned by the petitioning companies." It is understood that if the petitions are granted these companies will cancel their present leases with the New York and Stamford and release their right of way to it for motor coach routes.

Among the cities and towns where busses will be used if authorized by the Connecticut commission are Port Chester, N. Y., Greenwich and Stamford.

Abandonment of the old service and substitution of the new can be accomplished in a few weeks without any interruption of schedule, Mr. Miller said.

Sunday the trolley lines in Port Chester will be abandoned and a fleet of busses installed.

TIMELY TOPICS

FINGERPRINTS ON AUTO PERMITS

One of the most important features of the new State motor vehicle act of Pennsylvania provides that "every applicant for such license shall furnish with his application a set of his fingerprints and two photographs."

NEW VEGETABLE TRIED OUT

Dasheen, a new vegetable, is being planted in the West this year. The plant is little known here but for many years has been successfully grown in parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. They are tubers and are prepared for food like potatoes. A dasheen weighs from one to five pounds and an average of ten pounds may be harvested from a single hill.

ACCIDENTS CROWD LONDON HOSPITALS

The increasing number of motor accidents, not only in London, but in the country districts, is putting a serious strain on hospitals, where the cost of such accidents is anything from \$22,500 per year upward. At some hospitals, it is said, operations on hundreds of other patients are delayed by the motor accident victims.

Committees are being appointed to consider the better way to meet these additional costs. One suggestion which finds favor is that the motorist and the insurance company behind him be made to contribute systematically to hospital funds.

SECOND SPEED FOR BRAKING

Just as second speed makes the best combination for a quick getaway so does it make one of the best ways of stopping quickly in traffic. When the spurt of speed is simply a matter of skinning past a few snailing cars, and stopping again behind a street car some two hundred feet ahead, remaining in second will be found handy for the entire job of speeding up and slowing down. Nineteenths of the job can be done with the throttle, which is a bit closer to the ideal in speed control.

REAL SUICIDE CLUB FOUND IN BUDAPEST

Police in Budapest are searching for the writer of an anonymous letter describing a suicide club, supposedly of wide ramifications.

The letter was obviously written by a woman of education, who stated she had become a member of the club by accident. Meetings of the club are held twice a week in various centres. Lectures and discourses extolling the virtues of suicide are presented, she said.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of suicides here recently, the police declare.

AUTO EXPORTS RANK FIRST

Automotive exports now rank first in the value of all manufactured products exported, and third in value of all exports.

In the four years 1922-26, there were made in the United States and Canada 16,500,000 automobiles, of which 1,250,000, or about 7 per cent,

were exported. In these same four years General Motors sold about 3,350,000 cars and sold overseas 326,000 cars, or more than 9 per cent of the total number. The value of the overseas business of General Motors is at present 30 per cent of the total value of all makes of American and Canadian motor cars sold abroad, and exceeds any other American motor car manufacturer.

RAILROAD USES TRUCK TO MAKE DELIVERIES

The Boston & Maine Railroad, acting through its motor truck subsidiary, the Boston & Maine Transportation Company, has inaugurated a store-door delivery service utilizing steel freight containers which are interchangeable between truck and train.

The containers, which have a capacity of five tons, may be loaded inside a shipper's factory in Boston, locked securely, transferred by truck at any time before 6:30 p. m. to special cars on the railroad and carried by train to Worcester and Springfield in time for delivery before the next business day begins.

Handling of short haul less-than-carload shipments is greatly reduced, as is also damage to freight and losses due to theft.

5,000-YEAR-OLD TOMB FOUND IN EGYPT BELIEVED THE MOST ANCIENT ON RECORD

Discovery of a tomb estimated to be 5,000 years old, dating to the third dynasty of the Pharaohs, was recently announced. The discoverers say it may be the earliest tomb ever found in Egypt.

The find was made by Cecil Firth, who has been conducting excavations in behalf of the Antiquities Department of the Egyptian Government, at Sakkara, a village near the ruins of Memphis. Near Sakkara is the famous step pyramid, believed to be the oldest of the Egyptian pyramids.

The tomb is said to contain many unique features. It is located in the boundary wall surrounding the step pyramid and was discovered only after a long and difficult search, owing to extensive precautions taken by the builder to conceal it.

It is thought, but not yet established, that it is the tomb of Imhotep, architect to King Zoser, who built the step pyramid. Imhotep was greatly revered by the ancients, being considered one of the wisest of men and founder of the science of medicine, the law and other branches of learning. Other theories about the identity of the tomb are that it may have been used temporarily for Zoser himself during the building of the step pyramid, or that it may be the tomb of Zoser's Queen.

A deep stairway of a hundred steps leads down to the tomb through an obscure tunnel in the rock. Branch tunnels and stairways lead to a series of underground rooms, the walls of which once were blue tiled, like the rooms in the step pyramid.

The rooms still bear the remains of interesting limestone reliefs and decorations of its period, including the portrait of King Zoser. In one tunnel twelve magnificent alabaster wine jars were discovered.

PLUCK AND LUCK

— Latest Issues —

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